✓ Construction Project Check-List

- ◯ Check the contractor license number at www.cslb.ca.gov to make sure it is current and in good standing.
- ◯ Ask to see the contractor's pocket license and a current photo ID.
- ◯ Ask for a current list of contact information (telephone number and business address) for the contractor, subcontractors and suppliers.
- ◯ Find out from your local building department whether your project needs a building permit and confirm that your contractor will obtain all necessary permits.
- ◯ Get at least 3 contractor bids and references, and check out, in person, recent projects by the prospective contractors that had similar specifications.
- ◯ Ask whether your contractor carries general liability insurance and workers' compensation insurance for employees.
- ◯ Make sure all project materials and expectations are spelled out and signed in a written contract, including clean-up, debris removal, and site security. Ask your contractor if he or she understands exactly what you want.
- ◯ Have a timetable for each phase of your project and the corresponding payment schedule spelled out in the contract. Do not let payments get ahead of the work.
- ◯ Pay no more than 10% down or $1,000, whichever is less.*
- ◯ Never pay in cash.
- ◯ Keep all of your project documents, including payments, in a job file.
- ◯ Try researching your contractor's name online for additional reviews—but consider the source.

Protect yourself from unscrupulous or unlicensed contractors.

General Advice

- Only hire state-licensed contractors.
- Any contractor performing $500 worth of work or more (including materials and labor) must be licensed by CSLB to work in California.
- Don't rush into repairs, no matter how badly they may be needed.
- Don't hire the first contractor who comes along or be caught up in high-pressure sales tactics.
- Ask to see the contractor's "pocket license" or their representative's "Home Improvement Salesperson" registration. All contractors are issued pocket licenses that show the type of trade for which they are licensed, and the expiration date of the license. Ask to see a photo identification to confirm their identity.

CONTRACTORS STATE LICENSE BOARD
P.O. Box 26000
Sacramento, CA 95826-0026
800.321.CSLB (2752)
www.cslb.ca.gov • CheckTheLicenseFirst.com

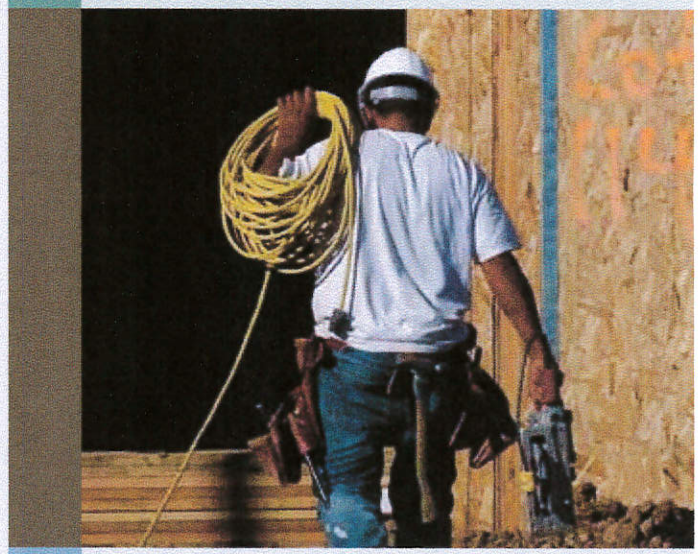
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

13P-078/0710

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Before Hiring A Contractor

The Quick Facts



CONTRACTORS STATE LICENSE BOARD

Department of Consumer Affairs

A free telephone call to CSLB or a few clicks on its website can help you verify that your contractor's license is in good standing and that he or she has the skills to complete your project.

Check Out the License

By law, anyone in California who contracts for or bids on a construction project valued at $500 or more (total labor and materials) must be licensed by the Contractors State License Board (CSLB). To qualify for a license, a contractor must verify four years of journey-level experience in the trade, pass both a trade and license law examination, and post a license bond. Since 2005, all new contractors are required to pass a background investigation that includes a criminal background check. Contractors are required, by law, to put their CSLB license number in all advertisements. Unlicensed operators are required to say they are not state-licensed in their advertisements.

- Ask to see the contractor's plastic pocket license and photo identification.
- Verify the license and make sure it is in good standing by visiting the CSLB website: www.cslb.ca.gov or by calling CSLB's toll-free automated line: 800.321.CSLB (2752).
- Get at least three bids and ask for references on work the contractor has completed in the local area. View the contractor's past projects in person.

Financial Information

- Don't pay in cash.
- Stick to your schedule of payments and don't let the payments get ahead of the completed work.
- Contractors cannot ask for a deposit of more than 10% of the total cost of the job or $1,000, whichever is less.* (This goes for any home improvement project, including swimming pools.)

Get It in Writing

- Make sure you have a written contract and don't sign it until you fully understand the terms.
- All changes to the contract, or "change orders," need to be in writing and signed by both parties.
- Keep a job file of all project papers and payments, and don't make the final payment until you're satisfied with the job.
- Homeowners waive their three-day right to cancel if they sign a "service and repair contract," which is different from a standard "home improvement contract." (Service and repair contracts are usually for emergency repairs where the consumer initiated the contact and cannot wait.)

License History

- If you want information about a contractor's license history and pending or prior disciplinary actions, please call the appropriate CSLB Legal Action Disclosure telephone number:

  Northern Region: 916.255.4041
  Southern Region: 562.345.7656

Complaint Forms

If you have a complaint against a contractor, free forms are available at www.cslb.ca.gov or call 800.321.CSLB (2752) and ask for a copy of *A Consumer Guide to Filing Construction Complaints* and a complaint form.

* There is an exception to this rule for about two dozen contractors who have filed a blanket performance and payment bond with the Registrar. This information is noted on the contractor's license detail page on CSLB's website.