



Senior Bulletin

May 2017

Spring is scam season; be cautious

Spring is the season for home repair and maintenance season. Unfortunately, with so many homeowners looking to install pools, add rooms, renovate bathrooms, etc., Spring is also the season for home-repair scams by unlicensed contractors, which can lead to issues of substandard work and financial fraud.

Before you hire a contractor to assist you, the Nevada State Contractors Board wants to share some tips that will best ensure you are receiving the full protections available, should your project not go as planned.

The first step is to always hire licensed contractors. Anyone performing electrical, plumbing, heating, refrigeration, or air conditioning projects must be licensed. A licensed contractor must also be used for any work valued at \$1,000 or more (including labor and materials) or work that requires a building permit.

Verifying a contractor's license is easy and can be done online at www.nscb.nv.gov, by calling the Board at 775-688-1141 or 702-486-1100 or by accessing the Board's mobile

Woman loses \$40,000 to unlicensed contractor

A Nevada senior citizen recently found out the hard way the dangers of dealing with an unlicensed contractor. KTNV, Channel 13 in Las Vegas chronicled the plight of Joan Stuart, who hired Greg Barstow – operating under the business name Diamond Restoration – to install her backyard swimming pool.

After paying the former employee for a licensed contractor a \$10,000 down payment, work commenced.

“He seemed so honest. He said the people he had hired needed more money,” Stuart said.

Stuart continued to comply with Barstow's request for more money, but Barstow completed no more work. After eventually paying \$40,000, she was left with a “big hole in the back. It was really hazardous for anyone around the area.”

An investigation by the Nevada State Contractors Board led to Barstow, 50, pleading guilty to contracting without a license and obtaining money under false pretenses, among other charges.

While many Nevada homeowners are victimized by unlicensed contractors each year, verifying a contractor's license is a simple process. You can vet a contractor by using the Contractors Board's website, www.nscb.nv.gov or by calling the Board office at 702-408-1100 or 775-688-1141.

Whenever you are thinking about hiring a contractor, ask for his or her license number. Unlike business licenses, contractors' licenses are 5 digits, preceded by two zeroes – 12345 or 0012345, for example. Board employees and the agency's website can tell homeowners whether the person is properly licensed and what disciplinary action, if any, the Board has taken against the contractor.

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Board promotes Buddy Benches

The Nevada State Contractors Board co-sponsored Northwest Career & Technical Academy's "Construction with a Purpose" event on March 24. The construction fair allowed students to show off the projects they have been working on throughout the year, from toolboxes and sheds to mechanical robotic devices.

The "purpose," however, involved a construction project with the potential to build not only furniture, but also friendships. Over the last several months, NWCTA students built 11 "Buddy Benches" and presented them to local elementary schools in Las Vegas. Buddy Benches provide a safe, nurturing place for youngsters needing a friend to gather. Classmates seeing a child sitting on the bench are encouraged to engage them in conversation or ask them to join in an activity.

"The Buddy Bench program is example of the contributions the construction industry and career and technical education bring to a community," said Jennifer Lewis, public information officer for the Contractors



Elementary students try out their school's Buddy Bench. The Contractors Board coordinated the project, with Northwest Career & Technical Academy constructing the benches and Western Governors University Nevada providing funding.

Board. "The benches will help elementary students in their efforts to stamp out bullying, while serving as a symbol of how creative, hard-working students can give back to their communities in rewarding ways through careers in construction."

The Board has made it a priority over the last several years to promote the construction profession's impact on the

state, from helping diversify the economy, to creating vital transportation, communications and recreational infrastructure.

Western Governors University of Nevada provided funds to purchase the lumber and hardware to build the benches. DC Building Group will install them on the elementary school campuses.

Contact NSCB!

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Reno, NV 89521
775-688-1141

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2310 Corporate Circle
Suite 200
Henderson, NV 89074
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www.nscb.nv.gov

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application, available for free for Android and iPhone users.

Licensed contractors undergo a criminal background check, demonstrate their financial stability, bring at least four years of recent experience in their trade and pass licensing exams that test their knowledge of the trade(s) as well as construction, building, and insurance laws.

Unlicensed contractors may tempt homeowners with lower bids or too-good-to-be-true promises. But hiring them comes with additional risks. Fixing a poorly completed project almost always costs more than having it done right the first time.

Worse, some unlicensed contractors are true scam artists, using smooth-talking salesmen, high-pressure sales tactics, inferior materials and shoddy workmanship to take advantage of women, seniors, first-time homeowners and others they believe are susceptible to their ruses. In some cases, thieves posing as contractors will divert the homeowner's attention while an accomplice slips away to steal cash and valuables in the home.

While few resort to violence or thievery, unlicensed contractors are more likely to target seniors or other individuals they believe they can intimidate. Homeowners should exercise caution when they encounter these tactics from someone offering home repair services:

- "Today-only" pricing;
- Demands for large down payments and cash transactions;
- Offers to use leftover materials at a discount;
- Unwillingness to draft a written contract or bid

To avoid becoming a victim, ensure you have a clear vision of the work you want to be done and how much you are willing to spend.

Ask friends and family for contractor referrals. After verifying they possess the proper contractor license(s), obtain at least three bids and review them intently. Make sure each bid

is inclusive of all costs for all the work to be performed, along with quality materials, permitting costs, etc. This way, you will be comparing apples to apples. Remember that the lowest bid is not necessarily the best bid.

Once you have chosen a contractor, insist on a detailed, written contract that includes specific colors, model numbers and quantities of materials to be used, as well as a work and payment schedule. Ask for and verify the license of any subcontractors that may be used, and ensure payments are commensurate with the work completed.

Contact the Contractors Board if something does not seem right.

Remember that by hiring a licensed contractor, you may be eligible for compensation through the Board's Residential Recovery Fund if damages are incurred during the course of a project.



Protecting Nevada's Homeowners Since 1941

DOWNLOAD NSCB's MOBILE APPLICATION

Report Unlicensed Contractors • Look Up a License



**UNLICENSED
CONTRACTOR
HOTLINE**

**Southern Nevada
702-486-1160**

**Northern Nevada
775-850-7838**

You're Invited!

Celebrate Nevada's construction industry and the critical role construction education plays.

Tuesday, May 23 • 4-6 p.m.
4923 Hombre Way, Reno



Building Trades students at Reno's ACE High School - the Academy for Career Education - are building from scratch a 1,540-square-foot single-family home.

Their work will be on display during the event, and students will be on hand to describe the project and discuss how ACE is preparing them for fulfilling careers in the construction industry.

Learn about:

- Career and technical education
- The construction industry's importance to Nevada's economy
- How to hire a contractor

