

# California Contractors State License Board & Kern County District Attorney's Office



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CSLB #21-02

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## **CSLB Partners with Kern County District Attorney's Office for Undercover Sting Operation**

*Fourteen individuals cited for illegal contracting violations, including 12 who did not carry the proper workers' compensation insurance coverage*

**SACRAMENTO** – On March 16-17 the Contractors State License Board ([CSLB](#)) partnered with the [Kern County District Attorney's Office \(DA\)](#) and the [California Department of Insurance](#) to conduct an undercover sting operation for combating unlicensed contracting in Bakersfield. As a result, fourteen individuals were cited for allegedly placing illegal bids on home improvement projects and some did not carry the proper workers' compensation insurance for their employees. This is why CSLB is stressing that homeowners always "[check-a-license](#)" before hiring someone to do contracting work on their property.

To plan this operation, CSLB's Statewide Investigative Fraud Team ([SWIFT](#)) did some simple online searches and reached out to alleged unlicensed contractors through their advertisements soliciting for construction work. SWIFT agents then posed as homeowners and invited suspects to place bids at a single-family home near Meadows Field Airport.

Of the individuals contacted, fourteen came to place bids on fencing, flooring, landscaping, electrical, and painting. Bids ranged from \$1,200 to \$17,500.

Twelve of those suspects are now facing illegal contracting charges for placing bids well over the legal \$500 threshold that requires a contractor license ([Business and Professions Code \(BPC\) Sections \(§\) 7028](#)) and two were referred to the Kern County DA for further action. First-conviction penalties for contracting without a license in California include up to six months in jail and/or up to \$5,000 in fines.

“Those who operate without a California state-issued contractor license can potentially harm the public, tarnish the respectability of the construction industry, and take work from law-abiding licensed contractors by operating in the underground economy,” said CSLB Registrar David Fogt. “Additionally, unlicensed contractors likely don’t carry workers’ compensation insurance which could leave homeowners liable for workers injured on their property.”

Commenting on the operation, District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer stated “Legitimate contractors who follow the rules should not have to compete with unlicensed contractors who refuse to abide by even the most basic and fundamental consumer protection laws. Ensuring that licensing rules are enforced helps ensure the integrity of all contracting industries as well as protect the consumers who rely on contractors’ specialized knowledge.”

All 14 individuals are facing an additional misdemeanor charge for their illegal advertisements. Licensed contractors must display their license number in all advertisements; unlicensed contractors must state in all ads for work valued at less than \$500 that they do not have a license ([BPC § 7027.1](#)). The penalty for violating the advertising rules for unlicensed contractors is a fine of \$700 to \$1,000.

Twelve of the suspects who did not have the proper workers’ compensation insurance policies to cover those working for them are facing additional charges ([Labor Code § 3700.5](#)). As a reminder, contractors must carry workers’ compensation insurance if they have employees.

If contractors don't have employees, they must file a workers' compensation exemption with CSLB, which is noted on the license record.

Eleven of the suspects violating workers’ compensation regulations were also issued a Stop Order – a legal demand to cease all employee labor at a job site due to violation of state workers compensation insurance requirements ([BPC § 7127](#)).

Consumers are being urged to check a contractor's license status by conducting an "[Instant License Check](#)" which takes a matter of seconds on CSLB's website by typing in the contractor's license number, name, or business name. The search results reveal whether or not the contractor's license is active and/or in good standing.

Homeowners can also use CSLB's [Find My Licensed Contractor](#) feature to build and download a list of qualified licensed contractors in their area.

All suspects were ordered to appear at the Kern County Superior Court on a future date and time.

**NOTE: All suspects are presumed innocent until their case is resolved.**

**BAKERSFIELD DAY 1 – MARCH 16, 2021**

<b>SUSPECT NAME CITY OF RESIDENCE</b>	<b>LICENSE CLASSIFICATION</b>	<b>ALLEGED VIOLATIONS</b>
<b>Walter Hugo Mayta Tinoco</b> <i>Bakersfield</i>	<a href="#">C-27 Landscaping Contractor</a>	Contracting Without a License, Illegal Advertising
<b>Stephen David Lewis</b> <i>Bakersfield</i>	<a href="#">C-13 Fencing Contractor</a>	Contracting Without a License, Illegal Advertising, No Workers' Compensation, Issued Stop Order
<b>Maurisco Lopez</b> <i>Bakersfield</i>	<a href="#">C-10 Electrical Contractor</a>	Contracting Without a License, Illegal Advertising, No Workers' Compensation, Issued Stop Order
<b>Bryan Galicia*</b> <i>Winnetka</i>	<a href="#">C-33 Painting Contractor</a>	Contracting Without a License, Illegal Advertising, No Workers' Compensation
<b>Thomas Fahmi Badwi</b> <i>Bakersfield</i>	<a href="#">C-13 Fencing Contractor /C-15 Flooring Contractor</a>	Contracting Without a License, Illegal Advertising, No Workers' Compensation, Issued Stop Order
<b>Miguel Felix Hernandez</b> <i>Bakersfield</i>	<a href="#">C-13 Fencing Contractor</a>	Contracting Without a License, Illegal Advertising, No Workers'

		Compensation, Issued Stop Order
<b>Edwin Pimentel</b> <i>Bakersfield</i>	<a href="#">C-27 Landscaping Contractor</a>	Contracting Without a License, Illegal Advertising, No Workers' Compensation, Issued Stop Order

\*Referred to Kern County District Attorney

**BAKERSFIELD DAY 2 – MARCH 17, 2021**

<b>SUSPECT NAME CITY OF RESIDENCE</b>	<b>LICENSE CLASSIFICATION</b>	<b>ALLEGED VIOLATIONS</b>
<b>Rafa Landa</b> <i>Bakersfield</i>	<a href="#">C-15 Flooring Contractor</a>	Contracting Without a License, Illegal Advertising, No Workers' Compensation, Issued Stop Order
<b>Humbert Jilmer V Colquechagua</b> <i>Bakersfield</i>	<a href="#">C-27 Landscaping Contractor</a>	Contracting Without a License, Illegal Advertising, No Workers' Compensation, Issued Stop Order
<b>Jose Medina Negrete</b> <i>Bakersfield</i>	<a href="#">C-33 Painting and Decorating Contractor</a>	Contracting Without a License, Illegal Advertising, No Workers' Compensation, Issued Stop Order
<b>Jose Leobardo Aguilar</b> <i>Bakersfield</i>	<a href="#">C-33 Painting and Decorating Contractor</a>	Contracting Without a License, Illegal Advertising, No Workers' Compensation, Issued Stop Order
<b>Raymond Figueroa*</b> <i>Bakersfield</i>	<a href="#">C-27 Landscaping Contractor</a>	Contracting Without a License, Illegal Advertising
<b>Eric Lee Hogan</b> <i>Bakersfield</i>	<a href="#">B- General Building Contractor</a>	Contracting Without a License, Illegal Advertising, No Workers'

		Compensation, Issued Stop Order
<b>Luis Angel Tapia Mejia</b> <i>Bakersfield</i>	<u>C-15 Flooring Contractor</u>	Contracting Without a License, Illegal Advertising, No Workers' Compensation, Issued Stop Order

\*Referred to Kern County District Attorney

The Contractors State License Board operates under the umbrella of the [California Department of Consumer Affairs](#). CSLB licenses and regulates more than 281,000 contractors in California and is regarded as one of the leading consumer protection agencies in the United States. In 2020, CSLB helped recover \$26 million in ordered restitution.

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