

✓ 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 list of current 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 three contractor bids and references, and check out, in person, each prospective contractor's recent similar projects.
- Ask whether your contractor carries general liability insurance for employees in case accidental damage occurs during the project, 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 your project expectations.
- Schedule and document each phase of your project and the corresponding payment schedule. Do not let payments get ahead of the work.
- Pay no more than 10% down or \$1,000, whichever is less.*
- Avoid paying in cash.
- Keep all of your project documents, including payments and photographs, in a job file.
- Try researching your contractor's name online for additional reviews.

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

Protect yourself from unscrupulous or unlicensed contractors.

General Advice

- Only hire state-licensed contractors.
- Any contractor performing work of \$500 or more (combined labor and material costs) must be licensed by CSLB to work in California.
- Avoid being caught up in high-pressure sales tactics.
- Avoid rushing into repairs. Take the time to get at least three identical bids and verify testimonials.
- 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 license expiration date. Ask to see a photo identification to confirm their identity.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW Before Hiring A Contractor



CONTRACTORS STATE LICENSE BOARD

Department of Consumer Affairs



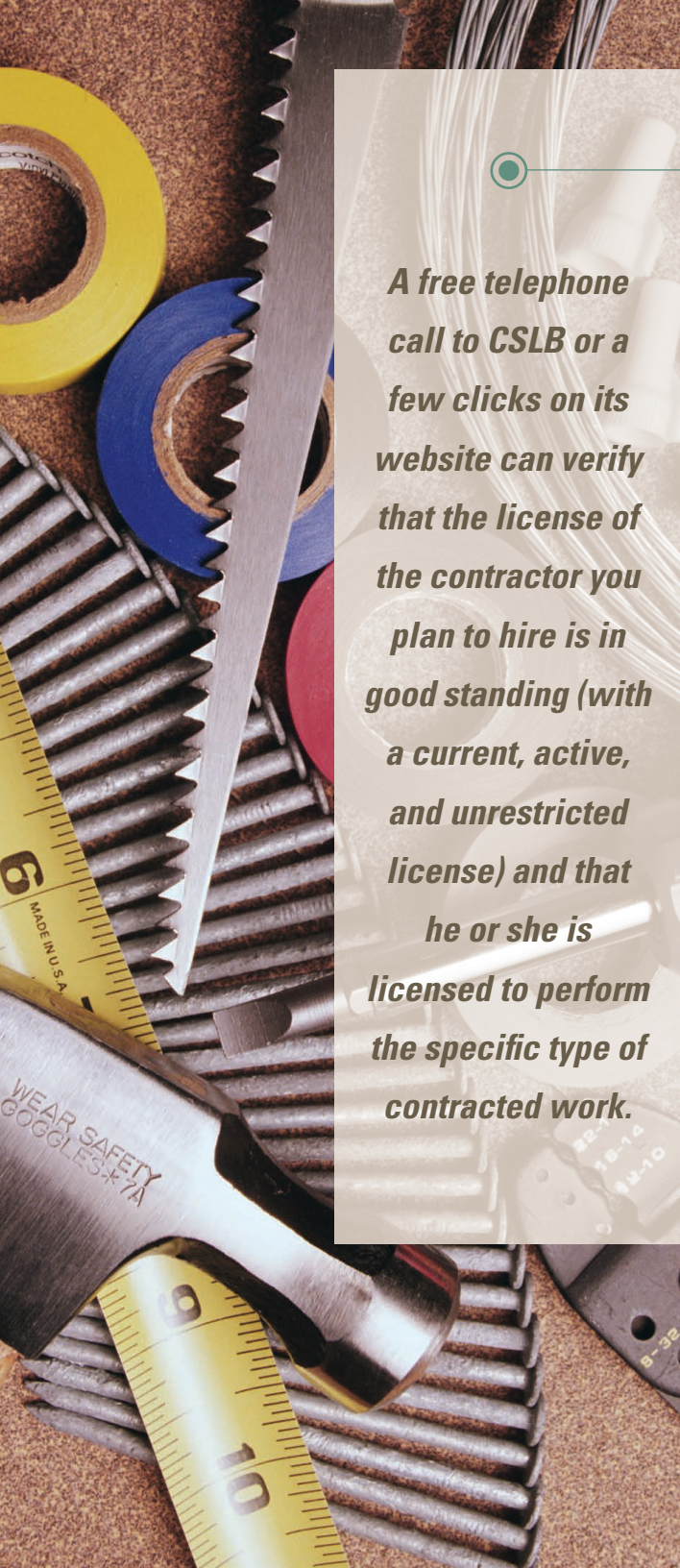
CONTRACTORS STATE LICENSE BOARD

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

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

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A free telephone call to CSLB or a few clicks on its website can verify that the license of the contractor you plan to hire is in good standing (with a current, active, and unrestricted license) and that he or she is licensed to perform the specific type of contracted work.

Check the License First

By law, anyone in California who contracts for or bids on a construction project valued at \$500 or more (combined labor and material costs) 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 and business examination, and post a license bond. Since 2005, all new contractors have been required to pass a criminal background check. Contractors are required to put their CSLB license number in all 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 www.cslb.ca.gov or by calling CSLB's toll-free automated line: 800-321-CSLB (2752).
- Remember: Contractors with employees must carry workers' compensation insurance. (C-39 Roofing contractors must have a workers' compensation policy even if they do not have employees.)
- Get at least three bids, ask for references from the contractors' previous customers in the local area, and view the contractors' past projects in person.
- Unlicensed operators are required to include in their advertisements that they are not state-licensed and can only perform work valued at less than \$500.

Filing a Construction Complaint

- File online at www.cslb.ca.gov
- Print complaint form from www.cslb.ca.gov
- Call 800-321-CSLB (2752) for complaint form and *A Consumer Guide to Filing Construction Complaints*

Financial Information

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

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, photographs, and payments—and don't make the final payment until you're satisfied with the job.
- Homeowners waive their three-day right to cancel (or five-day right to cancel if they're 65 or older) 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 repair work where the consumer initiated the contact.)

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