

News Release

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CSLB Media Contacts

Joyia Emard
Information Officer II
916.880-0590
joyia.emard@cslb.ca.gov

Kevin Durawa
Information Officer
916.255.4693
kevin.durawa@cslb.ca.gov

Natalie Watmore
Information Officer
916.255.3915
natalie.watmore@cslb.ca.gov

Wildfire Survivors Urged to Hire Only Licensed Contractors for Repairs, Debris Clearing or Rebuilding

Contractors State License Board cautions consumers to check licenses and avoid being victimized by unlicensed individuals.

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Devastating wildfires have destroyed thousands of structures in California and many survivors must now clear property and start the rebuilding process. The [Contractors State License Board](http://www.cslb.ca.gov) (CSLB) urges wildfire survivors to hire only California-licensed contractors to avoid being victimized by unlicensed persons and transient criminals.

Additionally, wildfire debris removal should not be done without first reviewing federal and [state options](#) or before consulting local officials. More information is available on the [Governor's Office of Emergency Services website](#) under "debris removal."

"Disasters bring out the very best in people, with strangers and neighbors helping each other," said CSLB Registrar David Fogt. "Unfortunately, unscrupulous individuals are drawn to these areas and try to take advantage of vulnerable home and business owners. Wildfire survivors need to be especially cautious about hiring reputable, licensed contractors to repair, rebuild, or clear property."

A CSLB-issued license is required for any construction job totaling \$500 or more in labor and materials. Additionally, it is a felony to contract without a license in a declared disaster area. Licensed contractors have met experience and testing requirements carry a license bond, passed a criminal background check and carry workers' compensation insurance for employees.

To help survivors, CSLB's [Disaster Help Center](#) webpage offers publications and videos. These include an [After a Disaster, Don't Get Scammed](#) brochure, and a [Rebuilding After a Disaster](#) video and [fact sheet](#). All information is also available by

calling CSLB's Disaster Hotline, 800-962-1125, which is staffed Monday to Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., or by calling the automated assistance line at 800-321-CSLB (2752).

"CSLB will aggressively seek those trying to take advantage of wildfire survivors by partnering with local and state agencies to conduct sweeps and undercover enforcement operations in disaster areas," Fogt said.

Tips for Hiring a Contractor

Hire only California-licensed contractors. Ask to see the license. The number must be on all advertisements, contracts and business cards.

Check the license number on CSLB's [website](#) or by phone at 800-321-CSLB (2752). Confirm the contractor has workers' compensation insurance for employees.

Create a personalized list of licensed, area contractors using the [Find My Licensed Contractor](#).

Get three bids, check references, and get a written contract.

Don't rush into decisions and don't hire the first contractor who comes along.

Don't pay more than 10 percent down or \$1,000—whichever is less.

Don't pay cash, and don't let the payments get ahead of the work. Only pay for work as it is completed to your satisfaction

Keep a job file of all project papers, including correspondence and copies of all payments.

Avoid making the final payment until you're satisfied with the job.

In most cases, in a disaster area, consumers have up to seven business days to cancel a contract without penalty.

For more information, visit CSLB's [website](#), or connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).

About CSLB: *CSLB operates under the umbrella of the Department of Consumer Affairs and licenses and regulates nearly 281,000 contractors in California. In 2020, CSLB helped consumers recover more than \$26 million in ordered restitution.*

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