

# **DON'T GET NAILED!**

## **Protect Your Home!**

**Hire ONLY State Licensed Contractors that are fully insured with valid Worker's Compensation and Liability Insurance. Get Proof!**

*Is the person you are planning on hiring for your job really licensed and properly insured?*

Contracting for home improvements and storm repairs can pose many difficult problems if you are not careful. The information contained here can help you make smart choices and help you avoid being scammed and victimized by an Unlicensed/Uninsured contractor.

Avoid the litigation, the fines, and possibly having to pay for the job a second time. Contact your local building department to find out if the company or person you are planning on hiring is in fact a legitimately licensed contractor with active and valid insurance as required by law. You may have to hire a legitimate contractor afterwards to undo and redo the work after paying fines as well as the permit fine which is three times the original permit fee. Hire a legitimate contractor the first time! **DON'T GET NAILED!**

A valid state contractor's license is required to acquire a permit for any structural work, roofing, air conditioning, plumbing, electrical, alarm work, pool/spa work or any job which requires a building permit. Do you need a permit to remodel your house? Yes, more than likely. Call your local Building Department for more information on licensing, permit requirements and mandatory liability and worker's compensation insurance by contractors.

### **Don't Be a Victim of Unlicensed Activity**

The Department of Business and Professional Regulation licenses more than one million individuals in professions that touch your life every day. Each has the training and experience necessary to qualify, pass the strict state exams, meet the financial obligations (financial statements, clean credit) as mandated by the state and be awarded a Florida contractor's license. Being licensed in the State of Florida means a competency contractor's license issued by the State of Florida to be a contractor. Per Florida Statutes; A contractor's license is NOT simply an occupational license. Professional licensing laws

exist to protect the health, safety, welfare and financial well being of all Floridians. These regulations are for your protection.

Unfortunately, unlicensed activity exists in virtually every profession. These unlicensed individuals cause extensive physical and monetary damage to Florida's citizens every year. Some people claim to be experts, but only Florida's licensed professionals can prove it. Do not settle for anything less, the results could be catastrophic!

***Don't Be a Victim of Uninsured Activity***

All contractors are required to carry Workers' Compensation and General Liability Insurance. The goal is to make sure those working on your home are covered for injuries to people, materials, the existing house and the new work. Lack of insurance *could leave you liable for any injuries suffered on the job*.

If they or their uninsured employees become injured on your property they could sue you for damages including but not limited to all medical costs as well as all present and future lost wages, which could add up to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

*Protect Your Interest - Get proof of the State License and Proper Insurance.*

Avoid scams! Call your building Department and verify before you sign a contract!

***Beware of the possible effects of Unlicensed/Uninsured activity & No permit - BEWARE:***

- § **They may offer lower pricing** because they do not pay State & local licensing fees. Do not have or pay insurance premiums to protect your interests, a cheap price could cost you a bundle! Call your local building department – they are there for YOU!
- § They may not pay Federal and State payroll taxes as required by law. You may wind up in the middle of a tax battle. If they do not report and pay the taxes, you may have to!
- § May not be able to meet the financial requirements of paying vendors, which you may have to pay twice, even if they claim to have paid the vendors. Liens could be placed upon your property by vendors, unpaid employees and even the IRS and State for unpaid taxes.
- § May not meet the education or experience (skill) requirements and thus do shoddy work.

- § May not meet the Worker's Compensation and Liability Insurance requirements for safety regulations regarding a safe work place for the workers as well as you, per the law.
- § May not want to abide by the rules of the chosen profession, or the laws established by the legislature for the protection of the public. No permit and there are no guarantees!
- § If they offer to work only if you obtain the necessary building permits, which makes you responsible for the work done. Florida Building Codes must be followed!
- § If the price is substantially cheaper than a legitimately licensed and fully insured company? There are probably reasons why! This cheap decision could be a costly one!
- § If you are told no permit is needed and this information is wrong, you will be fined.
- § The fine for unlicensed activity per Florida Statutes 455.228 is a fine of up to \$5,000 on any person guilty of unlicensed contracting. In addition, the department may assess reasonable investigative and legal costs for prosecution of the violation. This is serious business!
- § Unresolved liens upon your property could result in foreclosure and loss of your home.

**Do Your Homework before you lose your house or your wallet!**

Find out who you are dealing with, are they insured? Are they registered and licensed through your local building department? Do they need a permit for they work they have proposed?

## **Questions to Ask a Contractor**

- § Do you have a STATE ISSUED contractor's license? NOT just an Occupational license!
- § What is your license number? Note the license number and check with your local building department to verify that the contractor's license is in fact legitimate, current and active.

- § What kind of insurance do you carry? Worker's Compensation? Liability Insurance? Get proof!
- § May I call the Building Department to verify your license and insurance filed with them?
- § Who will actually do the work? Are you the contractor? You want to speak with the contractor whose name is on the State issued license! Not someone that might use someone else's license.
- § Will you follow the Building Codes, get a permit and get the necessary inspections per the law?
- § Do you have photographs to show samples of your work? Or a web site with information?
- § Will you pull a permit for this work? Is a permit required? THEN VERIFY by calling!

**Verify the License, Verify the Insurance**

**Verify permit needs and Do Your Homework!**