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Sting Nets 73 Cases of Unlicensed Builders/Contractors in State

Investigators for the S.C. Residential Builders Commission (RBC) and S.C. Contractor's Licensing Board (CLB) found 73 cases of unlicensed activity when they participated in a national sting operation during the week of June 16, 2015, with NASCLA, the National Association of State Contractors Licensing Agencies.

Six investigators from the S.C. Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation's Office of Investigations and Enforcement and three staff members reviewed internet listings and physically monitored home improvement store parking lots across the state to look for people who were advertising plumbing, electrical, carpentry, HVAC, roofing, home inspecting and other building services requiring licensure by LLR.

"The goal of the sting was to work together with NASCLA and other boards across the country to protect consumers and deter illegal construction activity," Residential Builders Administrator Janet Baumberger said. "This is the second time we have participated in the sting, and each time we have discovered at least 70 cases. We look forward to participating again to further protect consumers."

In addition to South Carolina, eight states participated in the sting: Arizona, California, Florida, Nevada, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah and Washington.

"LLR is committed to its mission of protecting the health and safety of South Carolina citizens," LLR Director Richele Taylor said. "Operations like these help us educate the public on how to protect themselves from unlicensed contractors and highlights the steps individuals must take to become licensed."

The Residential Builders Commission and Contractor's Licensing Board encourage consumers to check to see if a builder is licensed by going to www.llronline.com and clicking on Licensee Lookup.

The Residential Builders Commission licenses all residential builders and home inspectors and licenses/registers all specialty contractors in the state. The Commission investigates complaints from homeowners having problems with builders or licensed/registered specialty contractors and, if necessary, takes disciplinary action against them.

Most builders who do home improvement projects will fall under the Residential Builders Commission. However, a contractor might be licensed by the Contractor's Licensing Board, which regulates the

practice of general and mechanical contracting, burglar and fire alarm system businesses and fire protection sprinkler contractors.

“Persons holding themselves out to be a general or mechanical contractor while not licensed presents a threat to the general public,” Contractor’s Board Administrator Roger Lowe said. “By participating in this operation, it is clear that unlicensed practice presents a very real problem in South Carolina. If a property owner discovers that a potential contractor is unlicensed, we would encourage them to pass that information along to our Office of Investigations and Enforcement. By law, offering to perform regulated work without a license is the same as actually doing the work.”

In addition to making sure a builder is licensed, the Residential Builders Commission and Contractor’s Licensing Board offer the following tips when hiring someone to do work on your home:

- Ask the builder to provide you with the names and contact information of people he or she worked for in the past.
- Check with the Better Business Bureau to see if there have been complaints filed against the builder.
- Don’t rely on verbal promises. Ask the builder to provide you with a contract, and read it thoroughly to make sure everything you agreed on is in the document.
- Don’t pay all the money upfront.
- Beware of any builder or contractor who solicits business saying he or she “has material left over from another job in the area and can give you a real good price.” This is a sign you may be dealing with an unlicensed contractor or scam artist.
- Ask the builder, contractor or specialty contractor to provide you with a copy of his or her license or registration.
- Go to <https://verify.llronline.com/LicLookup/Resbu/Resbu.aspx?div=46> to verify the individual is currently licensed with the Residential Builders Commission.
- Go to <https://verify.llronline.com/LicLookup/Contractors/Contractor.aspx?div=69> to verify the individual is currently licensed with the Contractor’s Licensing Board.
- Go to <http://www.llr.state.sc.us/POL/ResidentialBuilders/index.asp?file=finalorders.htm> to search for any possible disciplinary actions with the Residential Builders Commission.
- Go to <http://llronline.com/POL/Contractors/index.asp?file=finalorders.htm> to search for any possible disciplinary actions with the Contractor’s Licensing Board.
- Call the Residential Builders Commission at 803-896-4696 or the Contractor’s Board at 803-896-4686 for assistance in locating an individual.

For more information on the national sting, visit:

<http://echo7.bluehornet.com/hostedemail/email.htm?CID=17861064983&ch=0607CB024AAF115817B4960A8BD1C9F3&h=c151357f0f0540826d351a4f1fe54522&ei=JAXbl2pNF>

For copies of Cease and Desist orders issued as a result of the sting, visit:

http://www.llronline.com/POL/NASCLA_Orders/

Orders are posted to this site as the Boards receive notice the orders have been served on the individuals.