



Nikki R. Haley
Governor

Holly G. Pisarik
Director

South Carolina
Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation



110 Centerview Drive
Post Office Box 11329
Columbia, SC 29211-1329
(803) 896-4390
FAX: (803) 896-4393
www.llronline.com

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Contact: Lesia Kudelka
Lesia.Kudelka@llr.sc.gov
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Sting Nets 70 Cases of Unlicensed Builders/Contractors in State

The S.C. Residential Builders Commission (RBC) recently participated in a national sting operation in which investigators found 70 cases of unlicensed activity in an 8-hour period.

Six investigators from LLR's Office of Investigations and Enforcement worked with the RBC to review more than 200 internet listings and patrol home improvement store parking lots across the state to find people who were advertising plumbing, electrical, carpentry, HVAC, roofing and other building services requiring licensure by LLR.

"What we found in just one day further emphasizes our message that consumers need to be on alert any time they hire someone to do work to their homes: Make sure they are licensed, and never pay the full cost of the work upfront," RBC Administrator Janet Baumberger said. "Our investigators and staff will continue their diligent efforts to find and shut down unlicensed builders."

The sting on September 10, 2012, was coordinated by the National Association of State Contractors Licensing Agencies (NASCLA), and the goal was for states to work together to protect consumers and deter illegal construction activity.

In addition to South Carolina, six states participated in the sting: Arizona, California, Nevada, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Utah.

"This was not a one-time occurrence," Baumberger said. "We routinely search the internet for unlicensed people who are offering building services in our state. And our investigators always have their eyes open for unlicensed activity."

Consumers can check to see if a builder is licensed by going to www.llronline.com and clicking on Licensee Lookup.

The RBC licenses all residential builders and home inspectors and registers all specialty contractors in the state. The commission investigates complaints from homeowners

having problems with builders or 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 LLR's [Contractors' Licensing Board](#), which regulates the practice of general and mechanical contracting, burglar and fire alarm system businesses and fire protection sprinkler contractors.

In addition to making sure a builder is licensed, the RBC offers 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 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 contractor who solicits business saying he "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.