

## **Looking to hire a contractor? Contractors Board offers advice and protections**

*By Margi Grein, NSCB Executive Officer*

As homeowners, we've all experienced or will soon find out some of the pitfalls of owning your own home. Whether it's a faulty water heater, plumbing issues, or needing to repair an air conditioning unit in the summer, home repairs can take their toll on your pocket book and patience. Having the inconvenience of malfunctioning equipment is enough of a burden for one to handle, but then comes the process to hire a contractor. How do you know if you're hiring a qualified individual to come in and do the job right – the first time? We at the State Contractors Board (NSCB) can help!

### **Tips for Hiring a Contractor**

As you begin to research various entities to perform the work, there are some things you need to check before signing a contract:

1. **Is the contractor licensed?** Ask the contractor for his *contractor's license number*. This will typically be five digits preceded by two zeros, i.e., 0012345. Check the license number on our website under the "Online Searches" tab at [www.nscb.nv.gov](http://www.nscb.nv.gov). This will let you know the status of the contractor's license and if there have been any disciplinary actions taken by the Board within the last five years.
2. **Get at least 3 bids & 3 references for each contractor** – Obtaining multiple bids ensures that you have information on-hand to make an informed, comparative decision. The references are important because, like hiring an employee for a job, you want to ensure their reputation and past work experiences were positive for all involved.
3. **You've hired the contractor, now the contract** – Each contractor will have their own forms and system for writing up a contract, but there are some key things you should consider. Make sure the contract includes a **payment schedule** that keeps payments consistent with the completion of work. *Never let the payments get ahead of the work and always pay with check or credit to ensure a record/receipt of payment was made.* Secondly, make sure the contract is as **detailed** as possible, down to the type of product being used, the color of the wood being installed, etc. Leave nothing to question. And lastly, make sure you understand all the terms and conditions. Don't be afraid to ask questions or request some time to review it. *Never sign a contract if you are not confident with the information it contains.*

When homeowners take the time to do their research before hiring a contractor, they are more likely to have a positive outcome or enjoyable project experience. However, we understand this may not always be the case, even when a licensed contractor is hired, which is why NSCB has protections in place for you as homeowners.

### **Filing a Complaint with the Board**

If you've used a licensed contractor, you have up to four years from the date the work was performed to file a complaint with the Board if you believe the workmanship was substandard. Upon receiving your complaint, the Board will open a case file, conduct a jobsite visit to your home to inspect the work, and make a determination on the validity of the issues in your complaint. If the complaint is found invalid, the case is closed. If evidence is there to validate substandard workmanship, the Board will issue the contractor a Notice to Correct, which requires the issues identified be fixed within 20-30 days. If resolution to the matter is not addressed or fixed to the standards of the Board, your case will go to a Disciplinary Hearing.

### **Residential Recovery Fund**

The Residential Recovery Fund is a protection in place for Nevada homeowners of single family residences who have hired a licensed contractor and can demonstrate that damages were incurred as a result of their work. Eligible homeowners may be able to recover up to \$35,000 in damages, depending on the details of their case. *It is important to note that the Residential Recovery Fund is not eligible to homeowners who hire unlicensed contractors.*

While we hope you never have a negative experience with your project, the Board is available to answer your questions, review your contract/scope of work, and address your concerns at any time throughout the process of working with a licensed contractor. There are a number of resources available on our website in addition to the information listed above, should you wish to learn more about ways to protect yourself.

### ***How to Contact the Board:***

Phone: (702) 486-1100

Fax: (702) 486-1117

2310 Corporate Circle, Suite 200

Henderson, NV 89074

[www.nscb.nv.gov](http://www.nscb.nv.gov)

### ***Report Unlicensed Contractors:***

Phone: (702) 486-1160

Fax: (702) 486-1166

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