

# News Release

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January 26, 2017

CSLB #17-02

## CSLB Warns Homeowners to Do Their Homework Before Undertaking Storm Repairs

**SACRAMENTO** – This week Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. declared a state of emergency in most counties throughout California in response to a series of severe storms that swept through the state. The Contractors State License Board (CSLB) reminds homeowners to take the proper steps before hiring a contractor to work on their home, and warns unlicensed contractors that with the declaration come stronger potential penalties.

Flood victims should do their research and be aware of construction laws so they don't become victims a second time. The first step is hiring a licensed contractor. It is against California law to contract for home improvement or construction jobs, from debris removal to rebuilding, valued at \$500 or more in combined labor and material costs without a state-issued contractor license.

CSLB is also reminding contractors that they must hold a valid license with CSLB, in the appropriate classification, in order to perform most work on homes and other structures damaged by the recent California flooding and mudslides. It is illegal and punishable as a felony to perform contracting work in a declared disaster area without a California contractor license. Punishment may include up to 16 months in state prison or a fine of up to \$10,000.

“While many homeowners are eager to get storm damages repaired, we’d encourage them to be sure to do their homework,” said CSLB Registrar Cindi Christenson. “Taking a few minutes to check the CSLB website for a license, required insurance, and other information, could save you from becoming a victim of someone trying to take advantage of the situation.”

To become licensed, a contractor must pass a licensing examination, verify at least four years of journey-level experience, carry a license bond, and pass a criminal background check. A contractor’s license can be verified on [CSLB's website](http://www.cslb.ca.gov) to see if it is active and in the correct classification for the work

to be done. You can also check for legal complaints, the correct business name and address, and workers' compensation insurance coverage for employees.

CSLB urges consumers to follow these tips when dealing with a building contractor:

- Hire only California state-licensed contractors and ask to see the license.
- Verify the contractor's license with CSLB online or by calling toll-free at 1-800-321-CSLB (2752).
- Don't rush into decisions and don't hire the first contractor who comes along.
- Get three bids, check references, and get a written contract.
- 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.
- Contact CSLB if you have a complaint against a contractor.

CSLB, operating under the umbrella of the California Department of Consumer Affairs, licenses and regulates almost 290,000 contractors in California, and is regarded as one of the leading consumer protection agencies in the United States. In fiscal year 2015-16, CSLB helped recover almost \$41 million in ordered restitution for consumers.

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