



State of Utah  
Department of Commerce  
Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing

GARY R. HERBERT  
Governor

FRANCINE A. GIANI  
Executive Director

MARK B. STEINAGEL  
Division Director

September 17, 2012

**MEDIA ADVISORY**

**Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing (DOPL) completes Utah sting investigation, cites 21 unlicensed contractors in Davis and Washington Counties**

*"DOPL investigation part of national NASCLA multi-state sting operation targeting unlicensed activity"*

**(For immediate release)**

**SALT LAKE CITY, Utah** – Francine A. Giani, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Commerce and the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing (DOPL) announced today that Division investigators successfully concluded a week long sting investigation in Davis and Washington Counties as part of the National Association of State Contractors Licensing Agencies (NASCLA) In addition to Utah's investigation, licensing agencies in Arizona, California, Maryland, Nevada, Oregon, Rhode Island, and South Carolina also conducted sting operations to target unlicensed contractor activity.

"When homeowners want something fixed or upgraded, they are quick to compare prices but not quick to check to see if someone is licensed through the state," cautioned Francine A. Giani, "Do yourself a favor and take five minutes to check them out at [www.dopl.utah.gov](http://www.dopl.utah.gov) where you can verify, online, anytime."

During the week long operation, DOPL investigators set up decoy homes needing repair in St. George and Fruit Heights, Utah and then responded to internet ads by those advertising contracting services for repair and renovation bids on internet bulletin boards and online classified ads. Once investigators received bids from respondents, they were cited for unlicensed activity and given information on the process for gaining licensure through DOPL in Utah.

Some Citation examples include the following;

- Individual with a *Handyman Exemption* showed up to bid a job for \$5453.00 which exceeded the state's Handyman Exemption limit of \$3000.00 total for labor and materials.
- Unlicensed individual advertising as a landscaper offered to complete front and rear landscaping, hot tub removal, tree removal, new grass, and new sprinkler system within a \$10,000.00 budget.
- Unlicensed individual gave a bid to tile both upper decks for \$1,000.00 in materials and \$1,850.00 in labor. He also bid wood floors for upper floor for \$9,000.00 in materials (engineered wood flooring) and \$3,275.00 in labor.

“Based on the numerous high ticket bids received by our decoy homeowners, the public needs to make sure they work with licensed professionals to ensure your rights are protected under state law if the deal goes south,” advised Mark Steinagel, DOPL Division Director, “Otherwise you may end up paying twice for the same job when the phony contractor fails to deliver.”

### **Advice for Consumers on Choosing a licensed Contractor**

Consumers should be aware that internet bulletin boards and online classified ads may invite deceptive business opportunities. The following tips offer steps to take when seeking a bid for contracting work and how to protect the public from contractor fraud;

- Verify the contractor or business is actively licensed with the state of Utah at [www.dopl.utah.gov](http://www.dopl.utah.gov).
- Always hire a licensed contractor so you have the ability to file a complaint if something goes wrong in the business transaction.
- Get 3 written estimates to compare.
- Check at least 3 references with former customers.
- Check with materials suppliers on which contractors/companies they would recommend.
- Require a written contract to protect yourself and your property against liens.
- Don't make a large down payment; pay as work is completed.
- Monitor the job in progress.
- Don't make the final payment until the job is complete per the terms of your contract.
- Keep copies of all paperwork related to your job.

For more information please visit the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing's website at [www.dopl.utah.gov](http://www.dopl.utah.gov).

More consumer information is also available the Utah Division of Consumer Protection's website at [www.dcp.utah.gov](http://www.dcp.utah.gov).

For more information the National Association of Contracting Licensing Agencies, log onto [www.nascla.org](http://www.nascla.org).

---

---

For media enquiries contact:

**Jennifer Bolton**

Public Information Officer

Utah Department of Commerce

(801) 530-6646 office

(801) 652-8322 cell

[jenniferbolton@utah.gov](mailto:jenniferbolton@utah.gov)