



State of Utah Department of Commerce

Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing

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MEDIA ALERT

Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing completes national construction fraud sting, nabs unlicensed contractors in Layton and St. George areas with 32 Citations and \$20K in fines

"Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing (DOPL) joined nationwide investigation to target unlicensed and fraudulent activity in northern and southern cities."

(For immediate release...)

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah - Mark B. Steinagel, Director of the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing (DOPL) announced today that the Division completed a two week sting investigation in Northern Utah and Southern Utah locations to target fraudulent construction activity. Utah's undercover investigation was part of a national effort by members of the National Association of State Contractors Licensing Agencies (NASCLA). NASCLA members who participated from June 15-26, 2015 were Arizona, California, Florida, Nevada, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Utah and Washington.

"This year's sting operation targeted northern and southern locations where DOPL investigators saw trouble spots of unlicensed activity. The Division is proud of their achievements in identifying bad actors whose actions harm the public and take away legitimate business from professional licensees," stated Mark Steinagel, Director of the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing.

DOPL investigators used Craigslist, online classifieds, field checks, door to door hang tags and advertisements to snare those selling services that require a professional license. Investigators contacted the companies and individuals to request bids for home and business projects using a decoy home and commercial building as bait. Once bids were reviewed and fraud was discovered, investigators issued administrative citations, fines and explained the process for licensure with DOPL to the respondents. The investigative team saw an increase over 2012's sting with 32 citations and a total of \$20K in administrative fines issued for unlawful activity.

Consumers Tips 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.
- Always hire a licensed contractor so you have the ability to file a complaint if something goes wrong in the business transaction.
- Request 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.

To file a complaint, verify the license of a professional or check on whether a licensee has faced disciplinary action, consumers may log on; www.dopl.utah.gov for more information.

More consumer information is also available the Utah Division of Consumer Protection's website at www.dcp.utah.gov.

For more information the National Association of Contracting Licensing Agencies, log onto www.nascla.org.

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