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MEDIA ALERT

Utah Department of Commerce, Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing completes national construction fraud sting, nabs unlicensed contractors statewide with 2 Criminal Cases and 94 Administrative Citations

"Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing (DOPL) joined nationwide NASCLA sting to target fraud."
(For immediate release...)

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah – The Utah Department of Commerce announced today that the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing completed a two week statewide sting investigation 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 4-22, 2018 were Arizona, California, Florida, Mississippi, Nevada, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, and Washington. Utah investigators issued a total of 2 Criminal cases and 94 Administrative Citations for unlicensed activity or activity beyond the scope of a license during the undercover operation.

"This year's sting operation sent investigators across the Beehive state to make sure unlicensed activity whether in urban or rural areas was addressed to protect the public," stated Mark B. Steinagel, Director of the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing. "The Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing takes all forms of fraud seriously as it harms legitimate licensed professionals, Utah businesses, consumers and our state economy."

DOPL investigators were dispersed statewide to proactively investigate unlicensed activity on construction sites. This year, the Division's investigative team saw an increase over 2017's sting with 45 citations 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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