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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 96 Administrative Citations and \$543K in fines

"Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing joined nationwide NASCLA sting to target fraud."

(For immediate release...)

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah – Francine A. Giani, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Commerce, announced today that the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing (DOPL) completed a three week statewide investigation targeting unlicensed contractors advertising online and across social media platforms. Utah's 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 3-21, 2019 were Arizona, California, District of Columbia, Florida, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, and Utah. DOPL investigators opened 178 cases, referred 21 cases for agency action, and issued 96 Administrative Citations for unlicensed activity with state fines totaling \$543K.

"Unlicensed contractors hurt homeowners and business owners with fraud, shoddy work and liability issues as well as taking away business from Utah licensees who follow the law," stated Francine A. Giani, "Anyone can verify someone's professional license and check for disciplinary action online, anytime at www.dopl.utah.gov."

DOPL investigators focused much of this year's sting efforts on targeting unlicensed activity across classified ads, social media and other online resources. Last month, the Division's investigative team saw an increase over 2018's sting with 96 citations issued for unlawful activity.

"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."

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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