

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

# Before Hiring A Contractor

*Protect yourself from unscrupulous or unlicensed contractors.*

## General advice

- There are scam artists posing as contractors who will take advantage of homeowners who are caught off guard.
- Deal only with licensed contractors.
- Any contractor performing \$500 worth of work or more (including materials and labor) must be licensed by the Contractors State License Board (CSLB) to work in California.
- Don't rush into repairs, no matter how badly they may be needed.
- Don't hire the first contractor who comes along.
- Ask to see the contractor's "Pocket License" or their representative's "Home Improvement Sales Registration." All contractors are issued pocket licenses that show the type of trade for which they are licensed and the expiration date of the license. Ask to see some additional form of identification so you can confirm their identity.



The Contractors State License Board operates under the umbrella of the California Department of Consumer Affairs. The CSLB licenses and regulates California's 310,000 contractors, and investigates more than 21,500 complaints against contractors annually. In fiscal year 2005-06, the CSLB helped consumers get more than \$44.8 million in restitution.



### CONTRACTORS STATE LICENSE BOARD

P.O. Box 26000  
Sacramento, CA 95826-0026  
1-800-321-CSLB (2752)  
[www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov)

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

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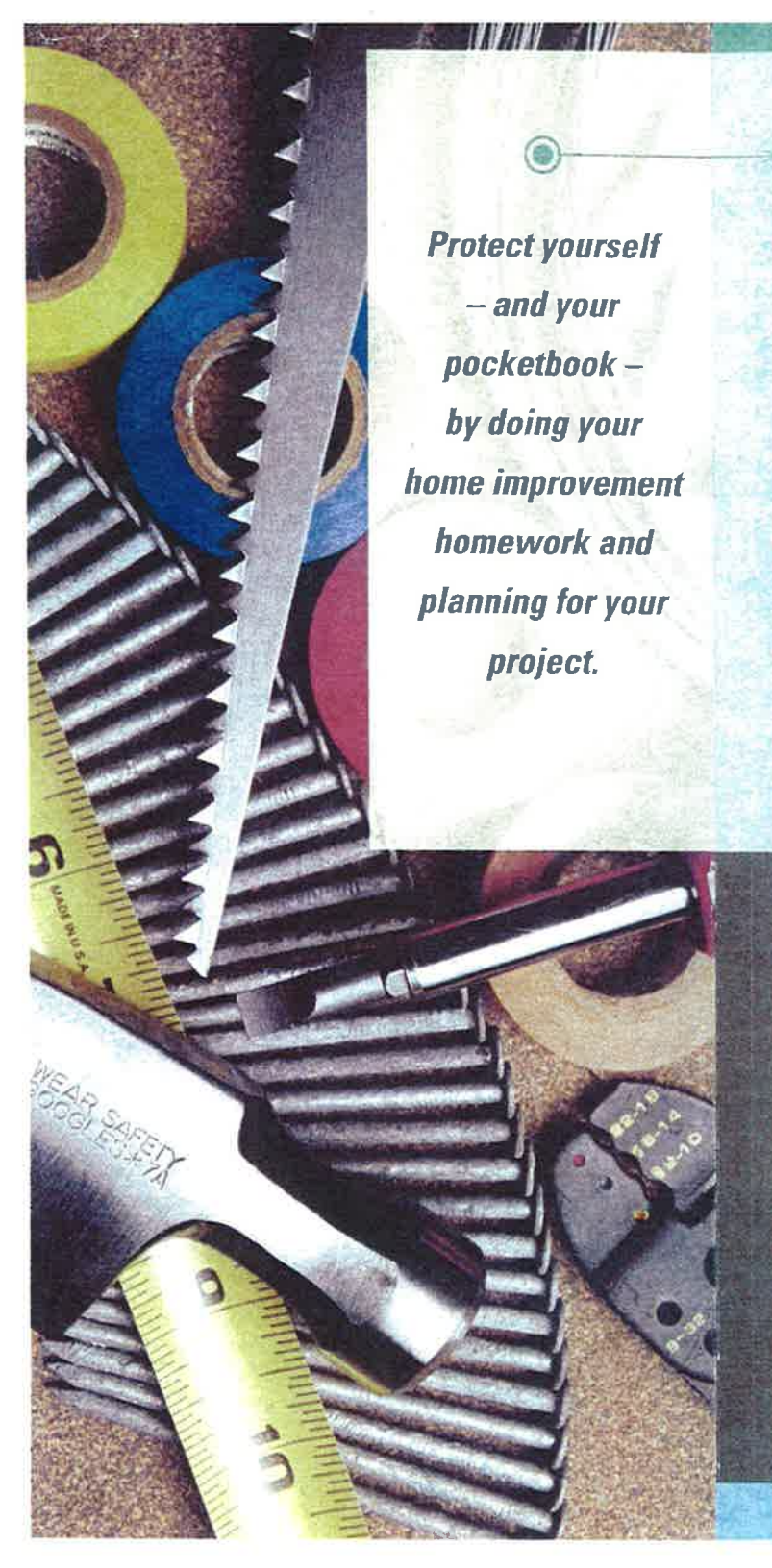
*The Quick Facts*



CONTRACTORS STATE  
LICENSE BOARD

Department of Consumer Affairs





**Protect yourself  
— and your  
pocketbook —  
by doing your  
home improvement  
homework and  
planning for your  
project.**

### **Call the Contractors Board**

- Contact the Contractors State License Board to verify the information provided by the bidding contractor by logging onto the Internet at [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov) or by calling 1-800-321-CSLB (2752). Be prepared with the contractor's name, license number and business address.
- Get at least three bids and ask for references on work the contractor has completed in the local area.
- Read the more in-depth booklet *"What You Should Know Before You Hire a Contractor."* The background information can help you make informed decisions when dealing with contractors. Order by calling 1-800-321-CSLB (2752), or download from the Internet at [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov).

### **Financial information**

- Don't pay cash.
- Don't let the payments get ahead of the work completed, and don't pay the full cost of the job up-front.
- Contractors cannot ask for a deposit of more than 10% of the total cost of the job or \$1000, whichever is less — unless the contractor provides a bond, approved bond equivalent, or approved joint control ensuring completion of your contract. Any such bond is in addition to the bond required of all contractors for licensure. (This goes for any home improvement project including swimming pools.)

- Make sure you have a written contract and don't sign it until you fully understand the terms.
- Homeowners waive their three-day right to cancel if they sign a "Service and Repair Contract" which is different from a standard "Home Improvement Contract." (Service and Repair contracts are usually for emergency repairs and the consumer initiated the contact and cannot wait.)

### **Check Out Their License**

CSLB provides information about a contractor's license, bond status, and workers' compensation as well as pending and prior legal actions. If you want information about a contractor's license status, please log onto the Internet at [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov) or call the Board's toll-free telephone number, 1-800-321-CSLB (2752).

### **Legal Action History**

If you want information about a contractor's license history and pending or prior legal actions, please call the appropriate Region Office's Legal Action Disclosure phone number:

Northern Region (916) 255-4041  
Southern Region (562) 345-7656

### **Complaint Forms**

If you have a complaint against a contractor log onto the Web at [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov) or call 1-800-321-CSLB (2752) and ask for a copy of "A Consumer Guide to Filing Construction Complaints" and a complaint form.