

Prepare before emergencies strike

Natural and man-made disasters can strike at any time, damaging homes and leaving people disoriented, feeling helpless and fearing for their safety. Older Nevadans living independently can be especially vulnerable, and while many emergency situations cannot be prevented, proper planning can mitigate the stress, fear and personal safety perils that come when weather, fire or accident disrupts our lives.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency offers tips on preparing for dealing with disasters before they occur. “While each person’s abilities and needs are unique, every individual can take steps to prepare for all kinds of emergencies,” FEMA notes. “By evaluating your own personal needs and making an emergency plan that fits those needs, you and your loved ones

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Include your pets’ and service animals’ needs in your emergency-preparedness plans.

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NSCB cites 12 in sting

Nevada State Contractors Board investigators cited 12 unlicensed contractors during a sting operation in Las Vegas on February 25. Seven suspects were cited for allegedly engaging in business or submitting a bid without a contractor's license, a violation of Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) 624.700. Five were charged with allegedly advertising without a contractor's license (NRS 624.720).

Board investigators identified potential unlicensed contractors through Craigslist postings, bulletin board flyers, home show participation and other means. Acting as property owners, the investigators contacted unlicensed contractors and invited them to visit the sting location to discuss tiling, drywall, electrical and other work. According to Nevada law, anyone performing repair and maintenance projects must possess the proper licensure if it involves electrical, plumbing, air conditioning, heating, or refrigeration work, the job requires a building permit, or if the cost of the project – labor and materials included – totals \$1,000 or more.

“Sting operations serve to identify illegal activity and encourage unlicensed contractors to obtain a contractor's license. More importantly, it is one of our most effective tools in reducing future risk to homeowners,” said NSCB Executive Officer Margi A. Grein. “Homeowners often don't realize the financial protections they lose when hiring unlicensed contractors. They are no longer eligible for reimbursement from the Residential Recovery Fund nor are they able to receive assistance from the Board to get workmanship issues corrected.”

The Board's criminal investigators conduct

Cited for contracting without a license:

Bradley Kallsen

Kelly Vickers

Frank Lowenthal

Francisco H. Rico-Murillo

Antonio Carl Montes

Graham Watson

Luis Manuel Casais-Najera

Cited for conducting unlawful advertising:

Sergio Rubio

Kenneth Davis

Sergio Samano

Jossef Behor

Francisco Igna Merlos-Barajas

stings to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Cases against unlicensed contractors are referred to the local district attorney's office for prosecution. A first offense is punishable by a misdemeanor, second offense is a gross misdemeanor, and third offense is a class-E felony.

The Board encourages anyone who suspects

unlicensed contracting activities to report it to the NSCB Unlicensed Contractor Hotline: (702) 486-1160 or (775) 850-7838. If available, include the unlicensed contractor's name, business address, project

location, phone number and vehicle make, model, color and license plate number.

When contracting for home repair and maintenance projects, always verify the contractor's license number on NSCB's website at www.nscb.nv.gov.



Ex-contractor pleads guilty, gets probation

A former contractor, whose license was revoked by the Nevada State Contractors Board, pleaded guilty to diversion of funds, a gross misdemeanor, in the Second Judicial District Court located in the County of Washoe.

Steve Charles Yon, who before his arrest had been listed on the Board's "10 Most Wanted List," list received a suspended one-year jail sentence and was placed on probation for 36 months. Yon was ordered to pay the victim \$9,745 in restitution and \$400 in administrative fees and reimbursement to the county public defender's office.

The Board revoked Yon's contractor license in March 2009. His company, Alpine Fence, was paid \$9,745 for a fencing project that he never



completed. Yon fled to the Sacramento, Calif. area and was living with a relative. NSCB worked with the California State License Board and local law enforcement, which placed the relative's home under surveillance. Yon was observed in the garage and was taken into custody.

He was then extradited back to Nevada.

NSCB reminds homeowners to be aware of signs they may be dealing with unscrupulous contractors:

- Contractor demands cash payment or up-front deposit.
- Contractor does not produce a contractor's license number or local contact information.
- Contractor offers "today-only" deals using extra materials from a previous job.
- Contractor solicits work because he noticed issues with your home.
- Contractor asks to perform a free inspection, followed by a laundry list of repairs that need to be made.
- Contractor balks at drafting a written contract.

Report unlicensed activity with mobile app

A new mobile application developed by the Nevada State Contractors Board makes verifying license information easier. The application, compatible with iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch and Android, is available as a free download.

With the application, users can search by business name, principal name, or license number to ensure a contractor maintains an appropriate Nevada contractor's license. Users can find disciplinary actions the Board has taken against licensed contractors during a specified time period or by discipline type.

The mobile application can also be used to report unlicensed contracting activity.

To download the free application for Apple products, visit the iTunes site:

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/nscb-mobile/id789876077?mt=8>. Usage requires iOS 5.1 or later. The app is optimized for iPhone 5.

For the Android application, go to Google Play: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.imd.nscb>

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can be better prepared.”

The agency advises older Americans create a team of friends, family and neighbors to ensure someone is available to assist them, especially if they have special medical or mobility needs. Make sure these team members are aware of your needs and how to operate any special equipment you require. Keep co-workers advised as well, in case the need arises during the workday.

FEMA also suggests creating a survival kit, a store of supplies that will enable you to ride out a disaster if help is unable to reach you. The agency says the kit should last for at least three days and should include plenty of food – don't forget a can opener – and bottled water. Also pack required medicine, along with other supplies you might forget if you wait until the danger is imminent or already has struck:

- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and extra batteries
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Local maps
- Pet food, extra water and supplies for your pet or service animal
- Extra wheelchair batteries

When the threat to safety has passed, the Nevada State Contractors Board offers tips for repairing any storm or fire damage to your home. The Board advises homeowners to conduct research before trouble strikes in order to know where to turn for repairs.

“This due diligence can help homeowners avoid rip-offs, ensure they receive timely service, and potentially save money on repair costs,” said NSCB Executive Officer Margi Grein. “Researching contractors for home repair emergencies may not be the most enjoyable way to spend a few hours, but the effort can go a long way toward ensuring peace of mind now and a return to normal after a home-repair emergency.”

Start your research by asking friends and family about contractors they have had good experiences with and call the Board or check our website to ensure the contractors' licenses are still valid and in good standing. Insisting on a contractor's license is your best defense against scams and poor workmanship, Grein said.

The Board suggests you identify at least three roofing, plumbing, electrical, heating and air conditioning contractors you are confident will perform quality services at fair prices. Homeowners are encouraged to maintain a list of these contractors, including their name, contact information, and contractor's license number, which can be relied upon confidently in an emergency repair/maintenance situation.

State law requires that all heating, air conditioning, plumbing, refrigeration, or electrical service must be performed by licensed contractors. A license is also required for any project requiring a building permit and for any project totaling \$1,000 or more – including labor and materials.

Contact NSCB!

RENO

9670 Gateway Drive
Suite 100
Reno, NV 89521
775-688-1141

HENDERSON

2310 Corporate Circle
Suite 200
Henderson, NV 89074
702-486-1100