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Advertising Proves Fatal For 13 Unlicensed Contractors

Lucas H. Schopper, a former Nevada licensed contractor who had his license revoked in October 2009, was recently arrested and booked into the Washoe County Detention Center on a \$2,277 Board warrant for *contracting and advertising without a license*. He was released on bail and given a date to appear in Washoe County Court.

Schopper's, **dba Bella Terra Professional Landscaping Services, LLC.**, license number 69623, was revoked for misrepresentation, failure to establish financial responsibility and acting beyond the scope of the license.

Acting as an unlicensed contractor, Schopper allegedly entered into a contract with a homeowner in January 2010 for the installation of a kitchen countertop in the amount of \$1,450. He failed to finish the job, and the homeowner filed a complaint with the Board. Schopper had been advertising his services on Craigslist.

Daniel Powers of Reno had bragged to an undercover NSCB investigator that he recently sheet rocked and painted a 52-room hotel in Southern Nevada. As an unlicensed contractor advertising his services on a local bulletin board in Reno, he provided a \$2,800 painting bid to the investigator and was quickly issued a criminal

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citation for contracting without a license. "Can I use someone else's license?" he asked the investigator. He was promptly told no and given a license application.

Kevin T. Sample, dba Kings Way Home Improvement, wanted to have his whole family involved in his business. His mother wrote an advertisement for flooring, tile, patio installation, landscaping, etc. His brother posted the ad on a Reno local bulletin board. Unfortunately, Lady Luck wasn't on his side. Sample's first caller was an undercover NSCB investigator. Sample was given a criminal citation for *contracting without a license*, upon providing a concrete bid for \$4,500.

Michael P. Buckner, dba Independent Commercial & Home Repair, chose to advertise his services on a flyer in the Reno area. He boasted of being able to install sheet rock, do water-damage repair, plumbing, decking and fencing installation and roofing. He provided a \$2,953 painting bid and was immediately issued a criminal citation for contracting without a license. His surprised response upon being cited: "I went over my limit. You got me."

Walter Gasbarri of Reno said he was forced to come out of retirement because of all the bad work Nevada contractors were doing. He said he had 40 years experience as a California contractor, and listed his jack-of-all trades services on a Reno bulletin board for plumbing, electrical and various carpentry skills. A quick check with the Contractors State License Board in California revealed that Gasbarri's license had been revoked, which explained why he went into "retirement." Gasbarri was issued a criminal citation for *contracting without a license*.

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Ralph Dennis, dba Nevada Construction Landscaping, was issued a citation for *contracting without a license* after providing a \$5,278 bid for the installation of pavers.

Seven unlicensed contractors in Southern Nevada were recently cited in a one-day sting operation for *contracting and advertising without a license*. They included:

Romaldo Moreno-Ortiz, dba Moda Lawn Service; Rafael Santiago, dba Eagle Landscape; Rafael Ortega, dba American Landscape; Jose Ochoe-Bocanegra, dba King Painters; Sandoval A. Gonzalez, dba Gonzales Services; Juan Carlos Gutierrez, dba Construction Works; and Phillip A. Foster, dba Foster's Building Services.

“Consumers should not be taken in by promises of cheap work performed by unlicensed contractors. In reality it may cost more, and the consumer is left with little or no protection,” said Margi Grein, Executive Officer of the NSCB.

“It is important for consumers to check the license status of any company they wish to hire at our website: www.nscb.state.nv.us,” Grein added.

The NSCB urges consumers to follow these simple tips when dealing with a contractor:

- **Hire only licensed contractors. Ask to see their NSCB license.**
- **Don't rush into decisions or hire without checking out potential contractors.**
- **Be especially wary when approached by someone offering home improvements door-to door.**

- **Verify the contractor's licensed by checking online at: www.nscb.state.nv.us or calling: (702) 486-1100 in Southern Nevada, or (775) 688-1141 in Northern Nevada.**
- **Ensure that the contractor is properly licensed for the work you want done on your home.**
- **Limit the amount of your down payment or deposit to 10 percent of the total contract.**
- **Don't pay cash without obtaining signed receipts, and don't let the payments get ahead of the work.**

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