



Consumer Alert

CONTRACTORS STATE LICENSE BOARD

9821 Business Park Drive, Sacramento, California 95827
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 26000, Sacramento, CA 95826

Check the License First!

800-321-CSLB

www.cslb.ca.gov

www.CheckTheLicenseFirst.com

CONTACT: Rick Lopes (916) 255-4161
Melanie Bedwell (916) 255-4717
Venus Stromberg (916) 255-1831

DATE: May 10, 2010
CSLB #: 10-21

Contractors State License Board Warns Californians: Don't Get Burned When Going Solar

Hot tips protect consumers from solar energy scammers

SACRAMENTO – The Contractors State License Board (CSLB) is alerting California homeowners about the need to select a licensed and qualified contractor before signing a contract for a solar energy project. Consumers who want to “go green” and take advantage of state and federal rebates and tax credits could be preyed upon by unlicensed, unscrupulous, or unaware contractors.

Unlicensed contractors in several parts of California have been convicted or are being investigated on suspicion of taking thousands of dollars from consumers for solar energy systems that were incorrectly installed – or not installed at all. Consumers may not qualify for government incentives if contractors fail to enter into solar energy contracts correctly.

CSLB urges consumers to consider the following tips before selecting a contractor for their home's solar power installation:

- Always check for the contractor's CSLB license. The state and federal government will not grant rebates or credits for a solar system installed by an unlicensed contractor. Ask the contractor to show you his or her pocket license and a photo identification to make sure it is the same person. Compare this to the license information at www.cslb.ca.gov to make sure this individual is a legitimate member of the business indicated on the license.
- Check the registration of sales representatives who solicit a contract on behalf of a contractor. A sales representative must be a Registered Home Improvement Salesperson (HIS) with CSLB. Ask to see the HIS registration card and ID, then check it on the CSLB website to make sure that individual is actually an employee of the licensed contractor *before* you sign a contract.

-more-

CSLB Consumer Alert

Contractors State License Board Warns Californians: Don't Get Burned When Going Solar 2-2-2

- Check your contractor's license classification on the CSLB website. Your utility company may require that a solar system be installed by a contractor with a specific classification.
- Don't pay more than \$1,000 as a down payment or 10%, whichever is less, for any contract. There is an exception for about two dozen contractors with special, consumer protection bonds that are noted on CSLB's website.
- Don't be pressured into signing a contract by intimidation tactics, such as losing out on government incentives for not acting quickly. This might be a hint that the contractor does not have your best interests in mind.

"Take a few minutes to research contractors by using the "Instant License Check" and other helpful tools on CSLB's website," said CSLB Registrar Steve Sands. "Legitimate, licensed contractors want customers to be comfortable and confident with the contracts they are signing. And licensees are more likely to do all that is required in order to receive available state and federal incentives for alternative energy."

More information about hiring contractors is available on the CSLB website or by calling 800-321-CSLB (2752).

The Contractors State License Board operates under the umbrella of the California Department of Consumer Affairs. CSLB licenses and regulates more than 300,000 California contractors, and is regarded as one of the leading consumer protection agencies in the United States. In fiscal year 2008-09, CSLB investigated more than 20,000 complaints and helped recover nearly \$36 million in ordered restitution for consumers.

#