



State of Utah
Department of Commerce
Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing

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Executive Director

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MEDIA ALERT

In Wake of Utah Storms, Homeowners and Businesses warned to watch out for scams

"Reports of con artists going door-to door offering unlicensed services to take consumers' money"

(For immediate release)

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah – Francine A. Giani, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Commerce, announced today that homeowners and businesses need to be on the lookout for fake contractors and companies who are targeting properties and individuals for fraud in the wake of last week's wind damage. The Department has received several reports of unlicensed contractors canvassing neighborhoods and businesses in search of properties that need repair. Often these pitchmen appear on your doorstep saying they have a great deal on whatever repair is needed and ask for cash upfront. The con artists then do a poor job or just disappear with the Utah victim's money in their pocket.

"While many volunteers have banded together to help Utahns recover from last week's storms, fraudsters have unfortunately mobilized to take advantage of Utah's trusting nature by offering cheap deals on your doorstep," warned Francine A. Giani, "Protect yourself by using a professional, licensed contractor who is insured to make sure you avoid further loss or damage."

Consumers are reminded that the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing (DOPL) offers free online services to aid homeowners and businesses at www.dopl.utah.gov. Also, the Utah Division of Consumer Protection has an online "**Buyer Beware**" list which shows companies who have been cited by the State for unlawful activity at www.consumerprotection.utah.gov

"Consumers can log on to DOPL's website 24 hours a day to find out if a contractor is licensed or if there has been a disciplinary action," offered Mark B. Steinagel, Director of Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing.

Tips for How to Avoid Becoming a Victim:

1. Be cautious of people that show up at your front door and tell you, "I'm in the area just for today." "I can perform the work for you really cheap," "You have to decide NOW."
2. Always ask to see a copy of his or her contractor's license. Utah law requires all contractors to be licensed. You can also call the Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing to check if a person is a licensed contractor in Utah at (801) 530-6628, Toll-free in Utah (866) 275-3675 or check on line at www.dopl.utah.gov
3. Ask for references of people they have performed work for previously, call those references.
4. Get a written bid. Then phone other licensed contractors to compare material and job costs.

5. Always get a written contract from the contractor. Often people are deceived by work performed on a vague understanding.
6. Make payment out to the name on the contractor's license. Never to an individual.

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