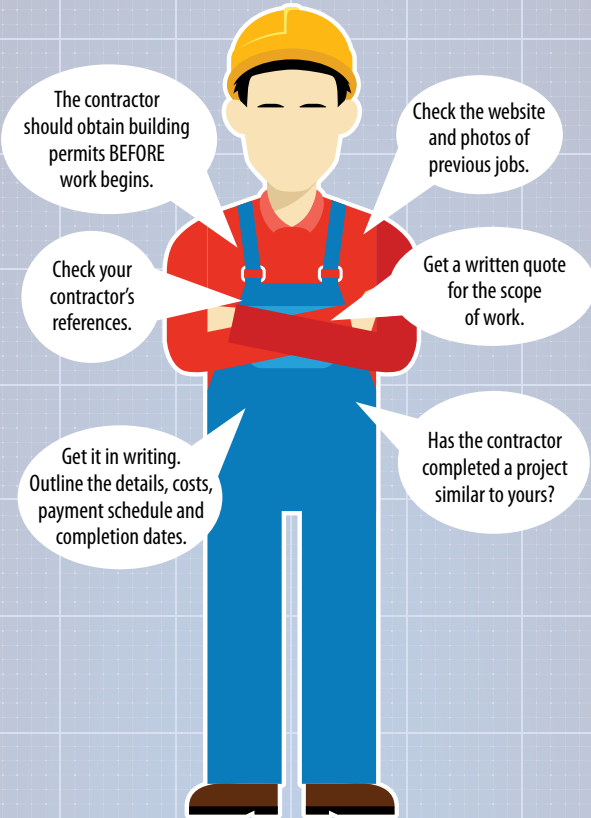


A GUIDE FOR HIRING YOUR CONTRACTOR



INSPECT THE WORK

Before you sign off and make the final payment, make sure you have inspected and approved the completed work. All work should meet the standards stated in the contract. Check if you have written warranties for the material and workmanship. Make sure the job site has been cleared of excess materials, tools and equipment, and that the area is cleaned thoroughly.



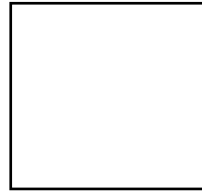
HELPFUL TIPS

- Ask to see the contractor's license. The license should be issued from Sarasota County or the Department of Business and Professional Regulation. Check a license at www.myfloridalicense.com.
- Ask for copies of the contractor's general liability and workers' compensation insurance policies.
- Ask for written estimates from several licensed contractors. License numbers must be printed on the estimate and/or invoice.
- Make sure that the entire scope of work for the job is written and detailed in the contract.
- Don't be pushed into starting early. A building permit must be issued and posted on the job site before work can begin.
- Ask for references. References can be customers or subcontractors that they have done business with in the past.
- Keep copies of contracts, canceled checks, receipts and photos of the work.



- A Business Tax Receipt (formerly known as an Occupational License) is NOT a license to perform contracting work.

To report unlicensed or unpermitted work, call the Sarasota County Contact Center at 941-861-5000.



Sarasota County
1001 Sarasota Center Blvd.
Sarasota, FL 34240

THE MOST IMPORTANT TOOL IS A LICENSE



**UNLICENSED AND UNPERMITTED WORK
IS AGAINST THE LAW.**

Report unlicensed or unpermitted work.
Call the Sarasota County Contact Center at
941-861-5000 or email ULA@scgov.net.

**CRIME
STOPPERS**
of Sarasota County
366-TIPS (8477)



VIOLATIONS CAN ADD UP TO HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS

As part of its commitment to protecting residents from unlicensed contractor activities and scams, Sarasota County has adopted an ordinance that empowers county staff to issue citations imposing fines against violators in the unincorporated areas of the county. Below is a list of violations:

- Doing any of the following without being duly licensed or registered as a contractor: engaging in the business of being a contractor; advertising oneself or a business organization as available to engage in the business; or acting in the capacity of a contractor.
- Commencing or performing work for which a permit is required without obtaining the permit.
- Falsely holding oneself or a business organization out as a licensee, local licensed or local registration holder.
- Allowing one's local license or local registration to be used by any unlicensed or unregistered person.
- Attempting the sale of contracting services and negotiation or bid for a contract without having a license.
- Failing to include the license number when submitting an advertisement for publication, broadcast or printing.



WARNING SIGNS OF AN UNLICENSED CONTRACTOR

Very often unlicensed contractors will work for less than licensed contractors because they do not have all of the insurance and licensing requirements. Beware of the following, as it may be a sign that you are dealing with an unlicensed contractor:

- If a contractor insists, "the county takes too long to get a permit," or uses language like, "trust me, a permit is not required."
Call us and ask!
- If a large down payment is requested before the work begins, you might be at risk. Only partial payments (draws) should be made until the work is completed.
- If you are asked to pay in cash or make your check payable to an individual or "cash," or to a different company name than what is on the contract.
- If you are only offered a verbal contract or a "handshake agreement."
- If the contractor is only willing to work on weekends or after hours.
- Asking you, the homeowner, to obtain permits.
- If their license numbers are not displayed on their business cards, contracts or flyers.

- If someone else obtained the permit other than the person or company contracted to do the work.
- There is no record of their business on www.Sunbiz.org.
- If your contractor won't show you proof of coverage and liability insurance, or the coverage doesn't match the company name listed on the contract.
- If they leave flyers in mailboxes, post business cards on bulletin boards or advertise on free classified websites.
- If they refer to themselves as a "handyman" or "Jack of all trades." There is no such thing as a handyman's license in Sarasota County or at the state level.
- They admit to not having a construction license but will manage the hiring and payment of tradesman on your behalf or "work as your agent."



DON'T BE A VICTIM: PROTECT YOURSELF

Using unlicensed contractors can be hazardous to the health, safety and welfare of you and your family. Hiring unlicensed contractors can also cost you more in the long run.

Unlicensed contractors often target uninformed and inexperienced homeowners, particularly elderly persons. **Don't let yourself be scammed!**

UNLICENSED AND UNPERMITTED WORK IS AGAINST THE LAW.

Homeowners may be liable for obtaining "after-the-fact" permits and the fees associated with obtaining them, as well as suffer penalties from the county and the DBPR. You may also be responsible for personal and financial injury to others.

Typically, a homeowner's only recourse to recover damages from an unlicensed contractor is through civil court.

VERIFYING CONTRACTOR LICENSES, filing complaints or reporting unlicensed activities.

To verify a contractor's license, or to file a complaint against a contractor, you can contact:

State of Florida

The Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) at 850-487-1395, or visit www.MyFloridaLicense.com.

To report unlicensed activities, call toll-free 866-532-1440.



Sarasota County

Sarasota County Planning and Development Services, Building and Permitting. To verify a contractor's license, call 941-861-6126. Email: licensing@scgov.net.

For a list of trades requiring licensing in Sarasota County, visit www.scgov.net.

To report suspected unlicensed contracting or activity, call the Sarasota County Center at 941-861-5000. Callers can only remain anonymous if there is reason to believe the suspected activity presents an imminent threat to public health, safety, or welfare or imminent destruction of habitat or sensitive resources.

