

News Release

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Media Resources

1. *Sting Operation Video*
2. *Sting Operation Still Photos*

Camp Fire Survivors Encouraged to Stay Vigilant as Multiple Agencies Partner in Rebuilding Undercover Sting

Operation catches unlicensed contractors trying to solicit for work in Paradise

SACRAMENTO – The Contractors State License Board ([CSLB](#)) has a warning for survivors of the Camp Fire in Paradise and other nearby communities in Butte County. Homeowners need to remain vigilant and not hire anyone to help them rebuild their home if they don't have a valid California contractors' license.

The warning comes after CSLB, the [Butte County District Attorney's Office](#), [Paradise Police Department](#), and [California Department of Insurance](#) conducted a two-day undercover sting operation.

In the operation, investigators from CSLB's Statewide Investigative Fraud Team (SWIFT) invited suspected unlicensed contractors to a property overlooking Little Butte Creek. The targets came to the property and gave undercover investigators bids for jobs including fencing, plumbing, concrete and vegetation demolition, and excavation.

A total of nine suspects provided bids ranging from \$600 to \$25,000. In California, all home improvement jobs from damage ~~caused by a natural disaster~~ totaling \$500 or more in combined labor and material costs must be performed by a licensed contractor ([Business and Professions Code \(BPC\) § 7028.16](#)). Punishment includes a fine of up to \$~~105~~,000 and/or up to ~~three years in state prison~~ six months in county jail.

Those nine and three other suspects may face a charge of illegal advertising. Licensed contractors must display their license number in all advertisements; unlicensed contractors must state in their ads that they are not licensed ([BPC § 7027.1](#)). The penalty includes a fine of \$700 to \$1,000.

Other violations cited at the operation included the fraudulent use of a contractor's license number ([BPC § 7027.3](#)), illegally large down payment ([BPC § 7159.5\(a\)\(3\)](#)), and failure to secure workers' compensation insurance ([Labor Code § 3700.5](#)).

The cases will now be turned over to the Butte County District Attorney's Office for prosecution.

[Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said "We have made it our mission to protect our Camp Fire victims in Butte County from over-reaching unlicensed 'contractors'. Proactive enforcement of contractor licensing requirements protects our consumers and legitimate contractors alike. Consumers are protected from illegal contracts and poor workmanship, and law-abiding contractors are protected from unfair competition by any who attempt to avoid the law's requirements." ADD MIKE RAMSEY QUOTE HERE](#)

"While it wasn't easy for our investigators to identify targets for this operation, we know there are still a substantial number of unlicensed contractors trying to get rebuilding work in the Paradise area," said CSLB Registrar David Fogt. "That's why homeowners need to stay on-guard and be careful as they look to hire people to help them rebuild."

Homeowners take a huge risk when they hire unlicensed contractors. Most are not properly insured and likely don't have the skills or knowledge to perform the work. Plus, recourse for homeowners is limited if an unlicensed contractor's work is substandard or never completed.

Consumers can also use the "[Find My Licensed Contractor](#)" feature to download and/or print a list of qualified licensed contractors in their area. They can also use CSLB's "[Check A License First](#)" to view information on a licensed contractor.

Suspects were either booked into the Butte County Main Jail or issued citations that are scheduled to appear Friday, March 20, 2020 at the Butte County Superior Court ([MAP](#)), 1 Court Street, Oroville, CA 95965.

NOTE: All suspects are presumed innocent until their case is resolved.

DAY 1 – JANUARY 24, 2020

SUSPECT NAME CITY OF RESIDENCE	LICENSE CLASSIFICATION	ALLEGED VIOLATIONS
John David Popejoy Oroville	C-13 Fencing	1. Contracting w/o License in Disaster Area 2. Fraudulent Use of Incorrect License # 3. Illegal Advertising 4. Excessive Down Payment 5. Possession of Controlled Substance
Charles Robert Forcinio Oroville	C-27 Landscaping	1. Contracting w/o License in Disaster Area 2. Illegal Advertising
Stacy James Hunter Magalia	C-13 Fencing	1. Contracting w/o License in Disaster Area 2. Illegal Advertising
Dwight Gene Skinner-Howard	C-13 Fencing	1. Contracting w/o License in Disaster Area

<i>Yuba City</i>		2. Illegal Advertising
Arnett Blair Baker II <i>Oroville</i>	C-13 Fencing	1. Illegal Advertising
Emmanuel Alvarez Diaz <i>Olivehurst</i>	C-13 Fencing	1. Contracting w/o License in Disaster Area 2. Illegal Advertising
Alejandro Baltazar Garcia <i>Olivehurst</i>	C-13 Fencing	1. Contracting w/o License in Disaster Area 2. Illegal Advertising

DAY 2 – JANUARY 25, 2020

SUSPECT NAME CITY OF RESIDENCE	LICENSE CLASSIFICATION	ALLEGED VIOLATIONS
Raul Ruiz <i>Chico</i>	C-21 Building Moving / Demolition	1. Contracting w/o License in Disaster Area
Roberto Lopez Casillas <i>Gridley</i>	C-36 Plumbing	1. Contracting w/o License 2. Illegal Advertising
Segundo Odi <i>Gridley</i>	C-21 Building Moving / Demolition	1. Illegal Advertising
Ignacio Osegura Lua <i>Marysville</i>	C-8 Concrete	1. Contracting w/o License in Disaster Area 2. Illegal Advertising 3. No Workers' Compensation Insurance
Brian Beitman <i>Chico</i>	C-33 Painting	1. Contracting w/o License in Disaster Area 2. Illegal Advertising

The Contractors State License Board operates under the umbrella of the California Department of Consumer Affairs. CSLB licenses and regulates almost 290,000 contractors in California and is regarded as one of the leading consumer protection agencies in the United States. In fiscal year 2018-19, CSLB helped recover over \$49 million in ordered restitution for consumers.

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