

Administrator's Update for 1/14/15
By Ray Sandrock, County Administrator

This week I'd like to cover licensed contractors and some of the hazards of hiring anyone unlicensed to work on your property.

Licensed contractors are vetted through the State of Florida Department of Business and Regulation or at a local level. They are required to prove their experience in their trade and they are tested in their trade and in business and applicable law. Their credit worthiness is scrutinized, they are required to go through a criminal history check, and they are required to properly maintain both general liability and workers compensation insurances.

Unlicensed persons are rarely properly insured. Did you know that if you hire someone who is not properly insured to work on your property and they get hurt, they can sue your homeowners insurance and you personally?

Licensed contractors are responsible from start to finish on your contracted job. Hiring unlicensed persons to work on your property can end up costing well more than what it would have cost to hire a licensed contractor to begin with—especially if they fail to do the work properly or permits are not obtained.

Unlicensed persons will usually tell you that you don't need a permit or that you can get it faster, cheaper if you obtain it as an owner builder. Permits cost the same regardless of who obtains it. Licensed contractors will not ask a homeowner to obtain the permit, if in the rare case they do ask you obtain the permit, ask them why.

If you have work done at your home that is not properly permitted and there is a problem, your insurance company is going to want to see that the permits were in fact obtained and that inspections were completed. Any work that was done at your home that required permits that were not obtained is now your responsibility. This means you will be required to obtain "after the fact permits" either as an owner-builder or hire a contractor to obtain the required permits. If work was done that affects the structural integrity of a home or has been covered up (by drywall or insulation as an example) it will have to be opened up for inspection or an engineer will have to certify it.

Avoid hiring people to work on your home through advertisements on Craigslist and similar websites. Legitimate contractors rarely advertise on Craigslist. Avoid the door-to-door salesman who have extra materials from a job they did down the street. Legitimate contractors do not do business this way.

You can verify the license of a contractor through our website www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov – in the "I want to..." list select "Find Licenses & Permits." If you have any questions, concerns or want to report unlicensed contracting please contact the Licensing Manager, Erin Mullen-Travis, by phone 941.623.1007 or email erin.mullen-travis@charlottecountyfl.gov.

Seeking input on the budget tonight

The public is encouraged to attend the upcoming Citizen Budget Input Public Hearings and provide input on the fiscal year budget for 2015/16 and 2016/17. One of the two Board of citizen budget input meetings is tonight at 6:00 p.m. in Room 119, Commission Chambers, of the Charlotte County Administration Center, 18500 Murdock Circle, Port Charlotte. The second meeting will be at 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2015, at the Tringali Recreation Center, 3460 North Access Road, Englewood. This is a great opportunity for citizens to provide input related to the budget.