

NEWS RELEASE

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STORM VICTIMS BEWARE OF UNLICENSED CONTRACTORS AND SERVICE COMPANIES

BISMARCK, ND - Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem reminds North Dakota residents to be cautious when hiring contractors and service companies to repair damage from the recent storms.

“When the severe weather moves on, the scam artists move in. Fly-by-night businesses appear overnight, ready to take advantage of residents desperate to get their homes and vehicles fixed. Don’t make it easy for them,” cautioned Stenehjem. “Before you sign a contract or hand over any money, make sure the company and its crew have all licenses required by state law.”

Stenehjem said these three simple steps can help you avoid losing your money to a scam operation:

1. Check to see if the contractor is properly licensed in North Dakota. Contractors who do a job valued at \$4,000 or more must be licensed by the Secretary of State. You can check that listing online at <http://sos.nd.gov/business/contractors>.
2. Any contractor or service provider that is not originally from the local area also must have a Transient Merchant license issued by the Attorney General. Check that list at <https://www.ag.nd.gov/Licensing/LicenseHolders/StTransMerchant.pdf>.
3. After checking for the required licenses, be sure to get a written contract which details the specific repairs being done. You may have to pay a small percentage up front for materials, but you should not make full payment until after all the work has been satisfactorily completed.

Parrell Grossman, director of the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection division, recommends property owners ask detailed questions to find out if a contractor is a local business or has just set up an office in North Dakota. “Ask when the company first located to North Dakota, check the phone directory for a local business listing to see if the company has previously been a local business, and don’t rely on representations that the company intends to stay in North Dakota,” he said.

Stenehjem encouraged residents to report unlicensed contractors to the Secretary of State’s office at 701-328-2900, or to their local law enforcement agency.

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