



# TOOLS & TIPS

CCB'S HOMEOWNER NEWSLETTER

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**Oregon Construction  
Contractors Board**

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## Protect Yourself From Paving Scams

It happens every year: scammers travel from state to state claiming to offer paving services to unsuspecting homeowners. These scams happen all over the country. A simple search for the term "paving scams" in your web browser will turn up articles from east coast to west citing occurrences that all sound eerily similar.

### *What happens?*

Scam artists go door-to-door, often claiming they have leftover supplies from work performed elsewhere in the neighborhood. After making a lowball offer to pave the driveway, they start work immediately, giving homeowners no time to reconsider.

They take money up front and perform shoddy work with low-grade materials. They're smooth-talking, forceful and often work in teams. Usually they return to demand more money through intimidation. Once the job begins, homeowners feel afraid to say "No, I won't pay more than the agreed upon price."

When the work is finished, they cash the check at the nearest bank, within minutes of pulling away from the property.

Their work crumbles quickly, or washes away with the first rain.

It can happen anywhere.



A recent article in the Bend Bulletin illustrates the work of one paving scammer that defrauded homeowners in Klamath, Deschutes and Lane counties. This textbook scammer walked away with thousands of dollars from homeowners who never received the services they paid for. You can protect yourself. With information about how these scams work, you can make informed decisions that can help you avoid scams.

## What Are the Signs of a Paving Scam?



Paving scammers have a formula that works, and they often don't deviate far from that formula. While their tactics are effective for unsuspecting victims, you can spot the signs of a scam if you know what to look for.

**A deal you can't refuse.** It's hard to walk away from an amazing opportunity, but you know what they say: If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

**"Limited time only!"** This is a pressure tactic that sometimes leads homeowners to make on-the-spot decisions without doing their homework. Do not be pressured by people soliciting door-to-door, especially for paving services.

**Not a lot of equipment.** Legitimate driveway paving requires equipment that pavers may leave in a conspicuous place or at the worksite. Meanwhile, paving scammers use surprisingly little equipment and have far less material than you would expect for the size of the job.

**Out-of-state plates, no CCB# on signage.** Often, these scam artists use magnetic signs to mark their trucks, which they then remove or replace between states. By contrast, contractors licensed with the state of Oregon should include their CCB number on any vehicle signage.

**Want to use "leftover materials".** Paving scammers often claim they have leftover materials from a job done just down the street. You may even have noticed their crew at a neighbor's house, which seems to lend credibility to their story.

## How Can You Reduce Your Risk of Becoming a Victim?

All homeowners have some level of risk of being scammed. Remember, if it wasn't an effective tactic, scammers wouldn't be doing it. Still, you can decrease your risk by adopting some of the habits below.

- **Make yourself wait.** Don't be pressured to act immediately. Wait a few days. Give yourself time to make an informed decision. If the contractor insists you must make a decision now, this is a red flag. Say no.

- **Check their CCB number.** Paving contractors must be licensed by the CCB. Get their CCB number and check the number to be sure it's active. Make sure the name of the business matches the contractor's business name.
- **Do your homework.** If you need driveway paving services, interview multiple contractors before choosing a professional you trust. Get references. Compare bids. Remember, driveway paving can be costly. Be cautious of bids that are dramatically lower than the others, and make sure it's an apples-to-apples comparison.
- **Get a family member's opinion.** Don't make big decisions alone. Talk to a family member who may offer a different perspective.

## How to Report Unlicensed Contractor Activity

Help us catch scammers. Report unlicensed contractor activity to the CCB. You can do this through our website at: [http://search.ccb.state.or.us/online\\_complaint\\_enf/](http://search.ccb.state.or.us/online_complaint_enf/) or call us at 503-934-2246.

## Want More Info? CCB Will Send You Helpful Publications (free!)

CCB provides publications to homeowners who would like to know more about performing home improvement projects and how to hire a licensed contractor. Email us at [ccbeducation@ccb.state.or.us](mailto:ccbeducation@ccb.state.or.us)

Tell us which publications, how many and where to send them. You can also call us at 503-934-2227 with the same information.

Here's a sample of the publications that we can offer:

- **Guide to Selecting a Contractor.** This guide provides in-depth information for homeowners beginning a large-scale home improvement project, like a kitchen remodel or a home addition. You'll learn when to get a contract, how to find a contractor, what to expect step by step through your project and more.
- **Home improvement checklist.** This quick reference checklist provides information about some of the steps to get started with your home improvement project.
- **"Anyone Can Pretend to Be a Contractor" business card holder with CCB business card inside.** This business card holder contains important messaging about how to search for a contractor's license online and how to report unlicensed contractor activity. We'll include a business card, so you can contact us if you have questions. Put it on your fridge! (note: we also provide this publication to contractors, who use them to hold their own business cards! If you're asking for this publication as a homeowner, be sure to tell us so we'll know to include a CCB business card.)



## Do you represent a community group, like a town council, a local non-profit or a retirement community?

We can send you publications to distribute or make available in your lobby or resource room. We can also provide webinars for your community group if you would like to see a presentation on this topic. Contact us to learn more! Call 503-934-2195, or email [leslie.culpepper@state.or.us](mailto:leslie.culpepper@state.or.us).



## Know Someone Making Home Improvement Projects? Tell Them About Our Newsletter!

We've created this newsletter to reach homeowners around the state regarding issues they face when hiring a contractor. In the coming months, we'll be covering topics like:

- Avoiding Unlicensed Contractor Scams
- Steps to Maintaining Good Communication With Your Contractor
- Steps to a Smooth Home Improvement Project
- Did You Know? Resources for Homeowners Starting an Improvement Project

Spread the word about CCB's newsletter! If you know someone who could use advice about hiring a contractor, the link to our sign up is located at: <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/ORCCB/subscriber/new>

Questions? Call 503-378-4621 or visit [www.oregon.gov/ccb](http://www.oregon.gov/ccb)