



Oregon Construction Contractors Board
700 Summer St. NE, Suite 300
Salem, Oregon 97309

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 7, 2014

Construction Contractors Board
Cheryl Martinis, 503-934-2195

Clackamas County Sheriff's Office
Lt. Robert Wurpes, 503-785-5000

Beware paving, other home repair scams

Pretend "contractors" offer too-good-to-be-true deals

Salem – An Estacada couple recently received an offer they couldn't refuse - a promise to pave their entire driveway for \$1,500. The \$1,500 was the most homeowner Fern Mathews said they could afford.

That wasn't a problem for the workers who showed up at their house. We'll work with you, one of them said. In fact, he had an extra truckload of material so he could give the Mathews a good price. Minutes later, the project was under way.

But instead of a freshly paved driveway for \$1,500, the Mathews ended up with a thin coat of soft, sandy gravel. And, once the two men started putting down material, they insisted on being paid \$4,700 to finish the work. In the end, Fern wrote a check for \$3,200.

"They make you nervous," the 67-year-old said. "It's just a scary situation."

That didn't stop her, however, from using a contact the men gave her to track them to a motel. Once she realized she wasn't getting a real paving job or her money back, she took down their license plates and contacted law enforcement.

"Our top priority is to protect our most vulnerable citizens — including the elderly," said Lt. Rob Wurpes of the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office. "We urge property owners throughout Oregon to exercise their good judgment when hiring a contractor, especially if the deal sounds too good to be true.

"We also encourage family members and neighbors to look out for citizens who may be especially vulnerable to financial scams."

While the CCB and law enforcement agencies are investigating the Estacada incident, Fern remained stuck with a mushy driveway as of early April. She warns others to beware of traveling construction workers who offer unrealistic discounts.

"Always use reputable contractors, check references and never pay all the money up front," added Berri Leslie, interim Construction Contractors Board administrator.

The contractors board recommends that property owners get a *written* contract for home improvement projects, even small ones.

Meanwhile, law enforcement and state regulators say the numbers of driveway, roof, and other home improvement scams will only increase as temperatures warm.

Here are some key ways to spot thieves:

- You don't call them – they show up at your doorstep.
- Their vehicles often show out-of-state license plates.
- They say they have leftover materials so they can give you a great price.
- They quote an initial low price, then demand more to finish the project.
- Generally, they are not licensed with the Construction Contractors Board (CCB). (Call the CCB at 503-378-4621 to verify that a contractor is licensed to work in Oregon.)

If you encounter a situation like this, call your local law enforcement agencies or the Construction Contractors Board.

Wurpes said that once money changes hands, as it did in Fern's case, it becomes harder to pursue criminal charges against fraudulent contractors. Often, the cases must be resolved in civil court — meaning additional time and expense for the victim.

“We're proud to partner with the Construction Contractors Board to combat this type of crime and make sure that perpetrators are held accountable whenever possible,” Wurpes said. “Working together, we really can make a difference.”

###

About the CCB

The CCB is the state agency licensing 33,000 contractors. Anyone who is paid to repair, improve or build a home must be licensed. Learn more about how to have a successful project at www.oregon.gov/ccb.