

As written by Frank Alexander, Administrative Chairman, OCILB

I would like to take this opportunity to address some common questions the Ohio Construction Industry Licensing Board (OCILB) receives regarding a State Contractor's License and how to obtain and maintain same.

A common question received by OCILB is, "Why do I need a license?" The answer is because it is State law. It also means that you are assuring the public that you carry the credentials, liability insurance and continuing education. It is a fact that the five specialty trades we license are trades that can blow up, burn down or flood a building. These trades are also known to save lives just as a doctor would. You probably wouldn't go to a doctor, a lawyer, or even a real estate agent who was not licensed. Their licensure ensures they know what they are doing via testing and continuing education. Obtaining a driver's license proves you passed a practical skills test and a written rules test, that you are competent to operate a motor vehicle, and that the State recognizes you as knowledgeable enough and having enough skills to trust you with other people's lives. Does it mean that you will always obey the laws that you learned and will never wreck your vehicle? Of course not, but it does spell out the consequences for not doing so. Getting your license means you know the rules and, therefore, are accountable to obey them. Just like having a driver's license assures other drivers that you carry all of the proper credentials, a State Contractor's License assures others that you have met all of the necessary State requirements.

Does having a State Contractor's License make you a good contractor? Absolutely not. Does it mean that you understand the difference between correct and incorrect ways of doing things? Does it mean that you have demonstrated that ability to the licensing authority? Does it mean that you have undergone continuing training? Does it mean that the public can place its trust in you until proven otherwise? Does it mean you should be held accountable for performing an incorrect job or shabby work? The answer to all of the above is "yes." Having the State Contractor's License demonstrates your capability and credentials and assures the public that you have knowledge of what you are doing.

OCILB also receives calls from licensed contractors saying they hold a license, pay the renewal fee, take the continuing education classes, etc. while unlicensed individuals are working without this overhead. OCILB has investigators who investigate unlicensed contractors upon receipt of written complaints, We are making more progress in this area each day. Callers also indicate that they are not only licensed with the State but also with several cities and counties. There is only one Specialty Contractor's License in the State of Ohio. What you "may" obtain from local city and county building departments is a "registration." If a building department has a registration in place, you are assured that they are not permitting your unlicensed competitors to perform any of the specialty trades in their area. Those building departments who have a registration in place must check for the OCILB license before permitting work. Those who do not have a registration in place do not check for the license and, therefore, may be allowing the unlicensed contractors to work in their area. The State does not have jurisdiction over local building departments. However, we do continue to encourage them to register and check for the license.