

Crackdown on illegal contractors finds 82 violators in Oregon and Washington

The effort is part of a nationwide construction enforcement campaign.

Surprise sweeps for unregistered contractors in Oregon and Washington last month resulted in 82 citations in three days.

Inspectors with the Oregon Construction Contractor Board (CCB) and Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) discovered the violations during unannounced visits to 636 construction sites throughout both states from June 12 to 14.

Inspectors conducted the contractor compliance sweeps as part of a national effort coordinated by the National Association of State Contractor Licensing Agencies (NASCLA) to highlight the issue of illegal contracting in construction and to track down violators. The coordinated effort also involved sweeps in Arizona, California, Florida, Mississippi, Nevada, Rhode Island, Texas and Utah.

NASCLA reported a total of 779 contractors that were found non-compliant with state licensing requirements. Administrative citations, criminal notices, legal actions, additional investigations, and more have been issued by the respective state contractor licensing agencies.

Most states require construction contractors to register with a specific state agency to confirm that they have a business license, insurance and bond — requirements that provide some financial protection in case a project goes wrong.

In Oregon, the CCB concentrated its investigators at job sites along the northern Oregon Coast from Newport to Astoria. The largest number of 32 alleged violations involved people working on home improvement projects without a CCB contractor license, including contractors that hired unlicensed subcon-

tractors or worked on homes built prior to 1978 without the required Lead-Based Paint Renovation license. The CCB is now sending notices of intent to issue civil penalties to those suspected of violations.

Additionally, CCB shared the information about suspected instances of employers “paying under the table” with state revenue and employment departments to ensure employers are reporting payroll and paying taxes.

In Washington, L&I inspectors held surprise sweeps in Clark, Kitsap and Pierce counties, Mercer Island and Bellevue in King County; Spokane, Spokane Valley, Cheney, and Medical Lake areas in Eastern Washington.

Inspectors checked 636 active construction sites and 1,522 contractors, plumbers and electricians. They issued 48 citations to unregistered contractors and unlicensed electricians and plumbers. Inspectors also checked whether contractors were following other L&I requirements. The sweeps resulted in 53 contractors being referred to the workers’ compensation audit program, 63 to collections, and one to the L&I Division of Occupational Safety & Health.

“While most contractors are following the rules, our recent sweeps show that there are some out there who are breaking the law. Hiring unregistered contractors puts your project dreams and your dollars at risk,” Dean Simpson, L&I’s contractor compliance chief said in a press release.

Consumers in Washington can check whether contractors are registered at *ProtectMyHome.net*.

Oregon consumers can verify contractor licenses at www.oregon.gov/ccb. Contractors and consumers can report unlicensed contractors and other illegal activity on the CCB’s website or by calling 503-934-2246.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Ironworker Shopmen #516’s Montgomery helped build a bridge in Panama

Patrick Montgomery and his employer, Fought & Co., are recognized at Labor Appreciation night banquet.

Patrick Montgomery, an apprentice with Ironworkers Shopmen’s Local 516 employed at Fought & Company, volunteered to travel to El Macho, Panama, March 16-30, to help build a pedestrian bridge under a program organized by Bridges to Prosperity. B2P is a U.S. nonprofit that partners with local governments around the world to connect impoverished rural populations with urban facilities and resources.

Montgomery was part of a 9-person team that spent two weeks erecting a suspension bridge so people and animals in the area could cross the river during rainy season and have safe, year-round access to education, health care, and markets. They slept in tents and worked with villagers who were willing to help. Montgomery was the only tradesperson in the group. The others were department of transportation engineers.

Montgomery brought a box of union T-shirts with him to give to villagers who helped build the footbridge.

“On the first day, two villagers showed up to help, and I gave them each a T-shirt,” he said. “The next day, 25 villagers showed up. I gave away all my T-shirts.”

Montgomery, a 15-year member of Local 516, recently completed a mechanic apprenticeship. A mechanic is Fought’s



Patrick Montgomery (right), a member of Ironworkers Shopmen’s Local 516 workers with a villager from El Macho, Panama, building a pedestrian bridge across a river that prohibits travel when it rains.

version of a fitter or assembler and is the highest achievable level as a fabricator. Montgomery’s job is to fabricate high rise components and bridge girders at the company’s facility in Clackamas, then complete assembly checks before tearing it down for shipment.

“I just love what I do,” Montgomery told the Labor Press.

“Patrick takes tremendous pride in his work ethic and was very excited, and grateful for the Bridges to Prosperity opportunity,” said Fought president Steve Fugate. “He was a great ambassador for the industry.”

Montgomery called the experience “very rewarding,” and hopes his story will generate more interest among signatory shops with Local 516.

“I came back totally humbled. We don’t know how good we

have it here,” he said. “If I get asked to do it again, I’ll go in a heartbeat.”

Fought’s and Montgomery’s participation in the Bridges to Prosperity program spurred Phil Casciato, business manager of Local 516, to nominate them both for Labor Appreciation and Recognition Night awards.

This was Fought’s first venture with B2P, but Fugate says it won’t be their last. “The value of what these bridges bring to these communities is unmeasurable,” he said.

Editor’s Note: Since its founding in 2001, Bridges to Prosperity has connected nearly 1 million people, and built over 250 footbridges, and expanded to 18 countries across Southeast Asia, Africa and Central and South America.

How to get single parents into the trades: Childcare

It’s boom time in the building trades. For anyone ready to work hard, family-wage union construction jobs are available — but first you have to get in.

That’s what pre-apprenticeship training programs are for: They help people get into the building trades, especially women and minority candidates who haven’t historically had opportunities or connections in the industry. Their programs are free, but they’re also unpaid, which means candidates have to have a way to support themselves during a

training that lasts five to 11 weeks, depending on the program. Single parents have an extra barrier: paying for child care during that time.

What if there were help to overcome that hurdle?

There is, now, thanks to Labor’s Community Service Agency (LCSA), a union-sponsored charitable organization.

With a \$40,000 grant from the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries and donations from local unionists, LCSA has just launched the Pre-App-

renticeship Childcare Initiative, a pilot project to provide child care stipends to low-income single parents who want to enroll in pre-apprenticeship programs. This summer, the first four recipients will enroll in programs at Oregon Tradeswomen Inc., Pacific Northwest Carpenters Institute, Portland Youth Builders, and Constructing Hope.

If the pilot succeeds, LCSA director Eryn Byram hopes to establish it an ongoing program.

NOTICE: A reminder that the NW Labor Press will publish only one issue in August — the special Labor Day edition on Aug. 24. If your local needs to update a meeting notice prior to that date, please do so in the July 20 edition.