

Spring brings out the worst in construction scams, State warns

Just when homeowners begin to think about spring home improvement projects, the Oregon Construction Contractors Board (CCB) has rolled out a new consumer-friendly website at www.hirelicensedcontractor.com.

"The agency's primary website includes a lot of information important to construction contractors," said Gina Fox, spokesperson for the CCB. "The new consumer-friendly website is what a consumer might need to help make a project run smoothly."

"Just like clockwork," she added, "spring tends to bring out the unscrupulous individuals looking for an easy scam."

Helpful information on the website includes time-tested tips the CCB recommends to all homeowners contracting to have work done:

1. Make sure the contractor is licensed with the CCB. Be-

fore hiring a contractor, check the contractor's license and complaint history at the new website or 503-378-4621. Take time to make an informed decision. You wouldn't trust an unlicensed driver with your car. Don't give the keys to your most precious investment to an unlicensed contractor.

Licensing is required for those who offer painting, roofing, carpentry, siding, plumbing, electrical, floor covering, concrete, asphalt, window, insulation, manufactured dwelling installation, inspection services, heating and air conditioning, and most other construction and repair services.

2. Use a written contract. Put all agreements, and changes, in writing. Generally, the more detailed a contract, the fewer problems that occur later. A big project needs more than a vague contract: "Remodel master bedroom, \$19,500" is simply

not sufficient. Know what your contract does, and does not cover. Don't sign unless you understand everything.

3. Get more than one bid, but don't automatically accept the lowest bid. The old saying, "you get what you pay for" applies to construction projects. A higher bid may be worth the price in better materials, workmanship and reliability.

A large number of CCB complaints result from homeowners accepting an unrealistically low bid and then being unhappy with the low quality of work.

4. Communicate. Asking lots questions before the job starts helps prevent problems later. Talk to your contractor throughout the project. Most disputes happen because people fail to communicate at every step.

5. Check references. Learn as much as you can about the contractor you are hiring.

6. Get building permits. Most

home improvement, repair or remodeling jobs require permits from your local building department. Usually contractors get them because they know what permits are required. But ultimately, the owner is responsible for making sure the required permits are obtained. Failing to get building permits doesn't save you money – it can cost you your safety and

Cedar Side Inn is cited for violation

According to information provided by OLCC, the Cedar Side Inn was cited for permitting employees to sell, mix, or serve alcohol – or manage those who do – without a service permit. Two employees involved. Ray Foster, president and Rosetta Foster, vice president paid a \$1,650 civil penalty on March 8.

sense of security.

Construction projects work best when consumers do their homework.

Columbia County unemployed still higher than state

Columbia County's seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was unchanged at 5.9 percent in February and about the same as the year before (5.7 percent). The rate was higher than the statewide rate (5.3 percent) and the national rate (4.5 percent). Total employment edged up by 63 from January to 22,594 and the number of unemployed people was unchanged at 1,594. Total employment this February was 608 more than one year before, but 99 more people were unemployed.

Community Calendar

APRIL 2007							MAY 2007							APRIL 2007						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	27	28	29	30	31	22	23	24	25	26	27	28		
29	30												29	30						

VERNONIA

Al-Anon	Fridays	7:00 p.m. Grange Hall
Alcoholics Anonymous	Mondays & Thursdays	6:30 p.m., Head Start Bldg.
American Legion Post #119	2nd Thursday	7:00 p.m., 627 Adams Avenue
Arts & Crafts Society	2nd Thursday	2:00 p.m., City Library
Booster Club	2nd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., VHS Library
Boy Scout Troop 201	Tuesdays	7:00 p.m., Scout Cabin
Boy Scout Troop 860	Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., LDS Church
Cemetery Beautification Comm.	2nd Thursday	6:30 p.m., City Hall
CERT	4th Wednesday	For Info Call 503-429-3018
Chamber of Commerce	2nd Wednesday	For Info Call 503-429-6081
Community Coalition	2nd Monday	12:30 p.m. School District Ofc.
Cub Scout Pack 201	Scout Cabin	For Info Call 503-429-4250
Friends of the Library	1st Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Vernonia Library
Girl Scouts, Neighborhood 4-2		For Info Call 503-819-0143
Hands On Art Committee	1st & 3rd Thursdays	4:00 p.m., City Hall
Izaak Walton League	3rd Thursday	For location call 503-429-7193
Lions Club	1st & 3rd Tuesdays	6:30 p.m., Buckhorn Restaurant
Municipal Airport Committee	4th Thursday	7:00 p.m., City Hall
Narcotics Anonymous	Saturdays	7:00 p.m., Head Start Bldg.
Pioneer Museum		For Info Call 503-429-3713
Public Works Committee	4th Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Hall
Vernonia Cares Directors		For Info call 503-429-1414
Vernonia City Council	1st & 3rd Mondays	7:00 p.m., City Hall
Vernonia Community PTA	3rd Thursday	7:00 p.m., WGS Library
Vernonia Grange	3rd Monday	7:00 p.m., Grange Hall
Vernonia Health Center	2nd Monday	6:00 p.m., 510 Bridge St.
Vernonia Learning Center	1st Wednesday	7:00 p.m., VLC
Vernonia Parks Committee	3rd Wednesday	6:30 p.m., City Hall
Vernonia Planning Comm.	1st & 3rd Thursdays	7:00 p.m., City Hall
Vernonia Pride	3rd Thursday	1:00 p.m., City Hall
Vernonia Ridge Riders	Last Thursday	7:00 p.m., Senior Center
Vernonia RFPD Board	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Fire Station
Vernonia School Board	2nd Thursday	6:00 p.m., District Office
Vernonia Sr. Center Board	2nd Friday	1:00 p.m., Senior Center
Vernonia Transfer Station	2nd & 4th Saturdays, 8 a.m.-2 p.m.	Behind VHS
Vern. Volunteer Ambulance Assoc.	1st Thursday	7:00 p.m., Fire Station
Vernonia Volunteer Firefighters	2nd Monday	7:00 p.m., Fire Station
WOEC Directors	3rd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., WOEC

MIST-BIRKENFELD

M-BRFPD Board Business Mtg.	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
M-BRFPD Board Workshop	4th Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
M-B Ambulance Drill	1st & 2nd Thursdays	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
M-B Fire Drill	1st & 2nd Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
M-B Helping Circle	2nd Monday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
M-B SAR Drill	3rd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
M-B Volunteer Assoc.	1st Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Natal Grange	2nd Wednesday	7:30 p.m., Natal Grange Hall
T.O.P.S.	Mondays	6:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
Upr Nehalem Watershed Council	For date call 429-2401	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station

BANKS

Alcoholics Anonymous	Fridays	7:00 p.m., Methodist Church
Alcoholics Anonymous	Wednesdays	7:30 p.m., Methodist Church
American Legion Post #90	2nd Tuesdays	7:30 p.m., Main Street Post
Banks City Council	2nd Tuesday	7:30 p.m., City Hall
Banks Fire District #13	2nd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., Station 13
Banks Planning Commission	Last Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Hall
Banks School Board	2nd Monday	7:30 p.m., Jr. High Library
Banks Youth Group	Sundays, Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., UMC Youth Bldg.
Chamber of Commerce	1st Thursday	12:30 p.m., Fire District Office
CPO 14	3rd Monday	7:00 p.m., City Library
Friends of the Library	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Library
Lions Club	1st & 3rd Mondays	7:00 p.m., Brown Derby
Sunset Park Assoc.	3rd Wednesday	8:00 p.m., Gun Club
T.O.P.S.	Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., Administration Bldg.

COLUMBIA COUNTY (All meet in St. Helens unless otherwise noted.)

Board of Commissioners	Wednesdays	10 a.m., Courthouse
Citizens for Senior Justice	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Sunset Park Church
Columbia Soil & Water District	3rd Wednesday	7:30 p.m., NRCS, 2514 Sykes
County Fair Board	2nd Monday	7:00 p.m., Fairgrounds 4-H Bldg.
County Parks Commission	3rd Monday	6:00 p.m., 1054 Oregon St.
Mental Health Advisory Comm.	3rd Tuesday	10 a.m., 2nd Floor, Courthouse
Comm. on Children & Families	3rd Thursday	5:30 p.m. OSU Ext., 550 N. Hwy. 30
Local Alcohol & Drug Plann. Comm.	2nd Tuesday	3:00 p.m., 2nd Floor, Courthouse

Organizations and meeting dates not listed may be included by calling 429-9410 or by mail to The INDEPENDENT, 725 Bridge Street, Vernonia, OR 97064.