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Plumbers: Show off your badge to fight unqualified plumbers

L&I is encouraging plumbers to wear their certification cards on their clothes instead of keeping them in their wallets.

Wearing the official cards up front shows consumers and contractors that they're working with a professional who meets state requirements to be a plumber. The goal: Protect consumers and eliminate unfair business competition.

"Journey-level plumbers have told us countless stories of consumers who unknowingly hire uncertified plumbers," said L&I Contractor Compliance Chief Dean Simpson. "The homeowners get charged at the same rate that certified plumbers charge, yet wind up with shoddy work that doesn't meet code."

General contractors who hire uncertified plumbers risk getting an L&I infraction.

State law requires plumbers to carry the credit card-sized, plastic certification cards that L&I issues. The cards feature the plumber's name and certification number, certification effective dates, along with L&I's name and the Washington state logo.

The cards are color-coded with a vertical stripe for quick identification. The stripe is green for journey-level plumbers and yellow for residential specialty plumbers.

Journey-level plumbers are qualified to work in all phases of the plumbing construction trade. Residential specialty plumbers are limited to working in single-family homes, duplexes and apartment buildings that don't exceed three stories.

Plumber trainees have cards with a red stripe. They must be supervised by a journey-level plumber at least 75% of the time on job sites.

"We're asking legitimate plumbers and contractors to help us spread the word: Always hire certified plumbers," Simpson said. "It benefits plumbers and consumers alike."

For more information, go to www.Lni.wa.gov/PlumberCards or call L&I plumbing technical expert Bruce Springer at 360-902-4768.



Sweeps surprise illegal contractors, unlicensed plumbers

Teams of L&I construction compliance inspectors have checked more than 550 general contractors, nearly 20 electrical contractors and close to 110 electricians and plumbers in surprise sweeps this year through August.

Instead of their normal practice working alone to find violators, inspectors converge in certain areas to check construction sites over one to two days during sweeps. This year, they've swept Kirkland, Bothell, Kennewick, Kitsap and Clark counties, Cle Elum, Ellensburg, Pullman and Spokane. Inspectors issued 54 infractions, including 30 unregistered contracting and 22 plumbing violations. Expect more sweeps this fall!



Shoreline company pays \$171,000 fine for improperly supervising electrical training

Unity Electric recently paid a \$171,000 fine for having electrical work done using inexperienced trainees without proper supervision.

L&I investigated the firm from May to October 2015. Through onsite visits and reviews of project records, state investigators found more than 300 instances of Unity having inexperienced, improperly supervised employees perform electrical work.

The work took place on an eight-story multi-use structure in Seattle and an assisted living retirement community in Ballard, among other buildings. The company underbid other contractors in 2015 for about \$5.4 million worth of electrical projects.

Improper electrical installations can lead to fires and other hazards. State law requires licensed electricians to supervise trainees, usually on a one-to-one basis. With Unity, up to five trainees worked under a single licensed electrician.

Investigators with L&I's Electrical Compliance, Outreach, Regulation and Education (ECORE) team handled the case, which was the largest the team has investigated in terms of number of citations and total fine.



Roofer charged with unregistered contracting – again

Peter Daniel Yeaman, owner of a Mason County roofing company, faces three criminal charges of unregistered contracting.

Charging papers in Mason County District Court accuse Yeaman, owner of Southgate Roofing, of agreeing to re-roof a house and accepting \$5,000 for the work in late 2015 even though he had no valid contractor registration. The consumer who hired Yeaman said the roofer never started the job, and wouldn't return his money.

Court documents say Yeaman cashed the check on Nov. 23, 2015. That was the same day he pleaded guilty and was sentenced in unrelated cases to unregistered contracting and a felony count of doing business after his workers' compensation insurance coverage was revoked.

Under that sentence, Yeaman was ordered to serve 10 days in jail and repay a roofing customer \$4,500. Part of the sentence was "suspended," and called for Yeaman to serve up to 354 days in jail if he broke the law within two years.

The case stems from Contractor Compliance inspector investigations. The department suspended Yeaman's contractor registration in November 2012.



Learn how to save money at free contractor workshops

Want to find out how to save money on workers' comp premiums? How to make your workplace safer? Or how to deal with difficult customers?

L&I offers free workshops around the state specially designed for construction contractors. The next Contractor Training Day workshops will be Oct. 21 at Spokane Community College and Nov. 18 at Renton Technical College. Learn more at www.contractors.Lni.wa.gov or contact outreach specialist Julie Perales at perj235@Lni.wa.gov or 360-902-6366.