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## **The City of Conway issues a warning regarding property repairs following storm damage from Hurricane Florence**

As City of Conway property owners begin the task of securing repairs after flooding, the City of Conway is warning residents to be on the lookout for scam artists and unlicensed contractors.

The biggest problem is homeowners paying too much in advance and hiring unlicensed contractors. The unlicensed practice of residential or commercial building in this state is a misdemeanor and upon conviction is punishable by a jail sentence and/or a monetary fine pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 40-59-200 and § 40-11-200 respectively.

**To protect consumers, the State of South Carolina LLR offers the following tips:**

- Take photographs of damage before repairs.
- Ensure that the person or business has the appropriate professional license to engage in the work offered by going to "Licensee Lookup" at [www.llronline.com](http://www.llronline.com). If you have a question about whether the scope of work requires a license or permit, call 843-488-9888.  
**Many agencies or organizations (such as FEMA) may not provide reimbursement assistance to property owners if the individual or company with whom they contract does not hold the required licenses.** FEMA's web address is [www.fema.com](http://www.fema.com).
- Do not panic and hire someone because they are the only company who can come out to your home or business immediately
- After assessing damage, contact the City of Conway Building Department for information on required permits at 843-488-9888.
- If possible, obtain recommendations from family, friends or co-workers and require that the builder provide you with a list of professional references that you can contact.
- Report unlicensed builders to the City of Conway Building Department.

**Before work begins on your property, keep these tips in mind:**

- Hire only state licensed, registered and insured contractors. Additionally, depending on the scope of work being performed, residential builders and specialty contractors in this state are required to have a bond on file with the Residential Builders Commission. Anyone doing construction work must be licensed or registered by the State of South Carolina.
- It is against the law to solicit door to door in the City of Conway.
- Don't pay money upfront. Wait until the work is done and you have carefully inspected it

- Ask for a Photo ID, their S.C. license and City of Conway Business License. Write down the information and keep it in a safe place. There is no good excuse for not showing a S.C. license or registration card.
- Verify that there is no cost for an estimate before letting anyone into your home or business. View the area with the contractor and take notes.
- Don't rely on verbal promises. If possible, get more than one estimate. Make sure price comparisons are for the same procedures and materials.
- Beware of any contractor who solicits business saying he "has material left over from another job in the area and can give you a real good price." This is a sign you may be dealing with an unlicensed contractor or scam artist.
- Make temporary repairs to correct safety hazards.
- Take your time signing a contract. Don't automatically select the lowest bidder, and make sure you fully understand any price variations.
- Require receipts for any payments made and retain those receipts for your records

**Remember to obtain a signed copy of the contract. A property improvement contract must include:**

- Builder's name and address
- City of Conway business license and building permit
- State of South Carolina (LLR) license number
- Date of completion
- Work to be done and materials to be used
- Cost and terms of payment

**Who Should Be Licensed for Repairs:**

The Residential Builder's Commission licenses all residential builders, electricians, HVAC, and plumbing specialty contractors, and registers all specialty contractors in the state.

Examples of specialty contractors are roofers, floor covering installers, insulation/dry wall installers, painters, masons, etc.

**Most builders who do home improvement projects will fall under the Residential Builders Commission. However, a general contractor licensed by the S.C. Contractor's Licensing Board, can also do residential building and repairs.**

**To see if your builder is licensed in South Carolina, go to "Licensee Lookup" on LLR's website at [www.llronline.com](http://www.llronline.com) or call the City of Conway Building Department at 843-488-9888.**