



Blueprint

for *Becoming a California
Licensed Contractor*

2005 EDITION



*Serving
California
Since 1929*
CONTRACTORS
STATE LICENSE BOARD



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Larry Booth, *Chair*

Paul Baldacci

Anthony Elmo

Gene Hale

John Hall

Matthew Kelly

Louise Kirkbride

John O'Rourke

Angelo Quaranta

John "Bert" Sandman

Hacob "Jake" Shirvanian

Joseph Tavaglione

Don Zampa

Stephen P. Sands, *Registrar of Contractors*

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While this publication is designed to provide accurate and current information about becoming a California licensed contractor, readers should consult the *California Contractors License Law and Reference Book* for specific laws.

For information about the Contractors State License Board, visit our Web site, www.cslb.ca.gov or call toll-free 1-800-321-CSLB (2752).

Foreword

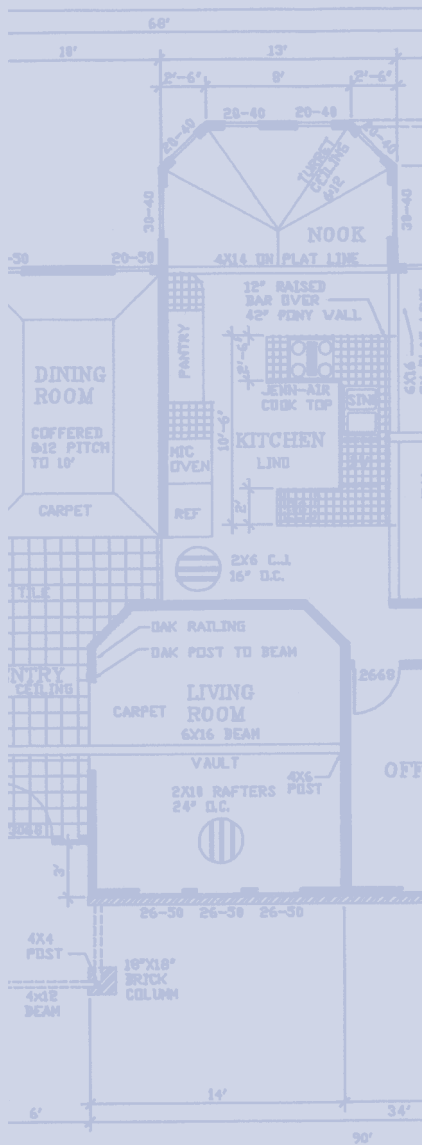
Construction is one of the largest industries in California's diverse economy, affording numerous opportunities for success. With approximately 280,000 contractor licenses currently issued, the Contractors State License Board receives more than 25,000 applications for new licenses each year.

This booklet answers many of the most frequently asked questions about what is needed to qualify for and obtain a contractor's license. The procedure for obtaining a contractor's license makes becoming a licensed contractor more convenient than ever—there are testing sites located statewide, and now you can check on the status of your application via our toll-free telephone number or Web site 24 hours a day.

However, merely holding a contractor's license does not make for a successful contractor. You must be skilled in the chosen craft and diligent in business affairs—one or the other is not good enough! You (and your employees) must be willing and able to perform to acceptable trade standards and according to plans and specifications. To survive in an increasingly competitive market, you must also fulfill your duties and responsibilities as a licensed and regulated business in California.

Besides licensing contractors, the Contractors State License Board handles more than 20,000 construction-related complaints a year. As our testing services for potential contractors have expanded, so have our enforcement activities against unlicensed contractors in the underground economy and unscrupulous licensed contractors. Consumer protection and construction productivity must co-exist in California, and we're seeing that they do by emphasizing enforcement education for the consumer as well as for the contractor.

Study beyond what you need to pass the test. Continue upgrading your skills in your craft and in business matters. Read the educational articles in each issue of the *California Licensed Contractor*, a newsletter you will receive when licensed. Take advantage of other educational opportunities as they arise because only by mastering both your craft and your business can you ensure success.



FLOOR PLAN

1/8" = 1'
2600 SQ. FT. LIVING
791 SQ. FT. GARAGE

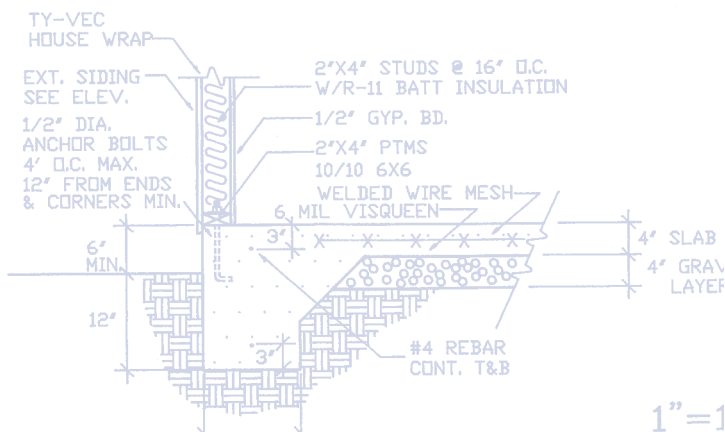


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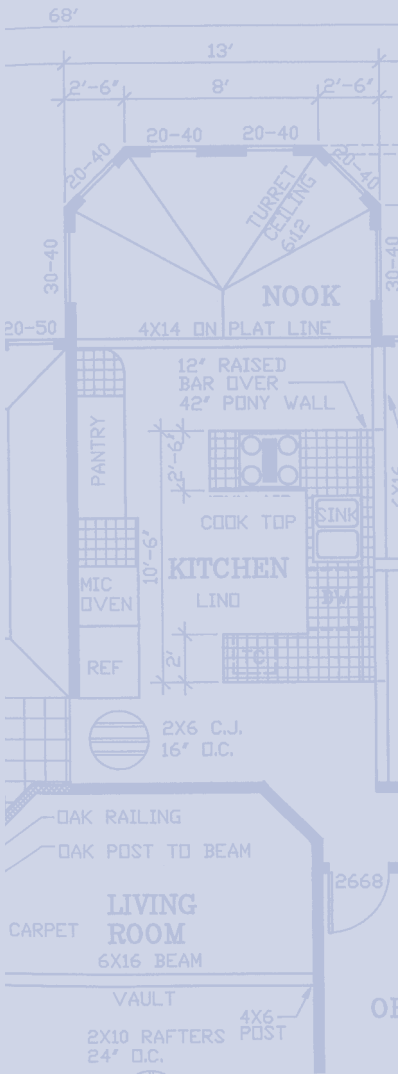
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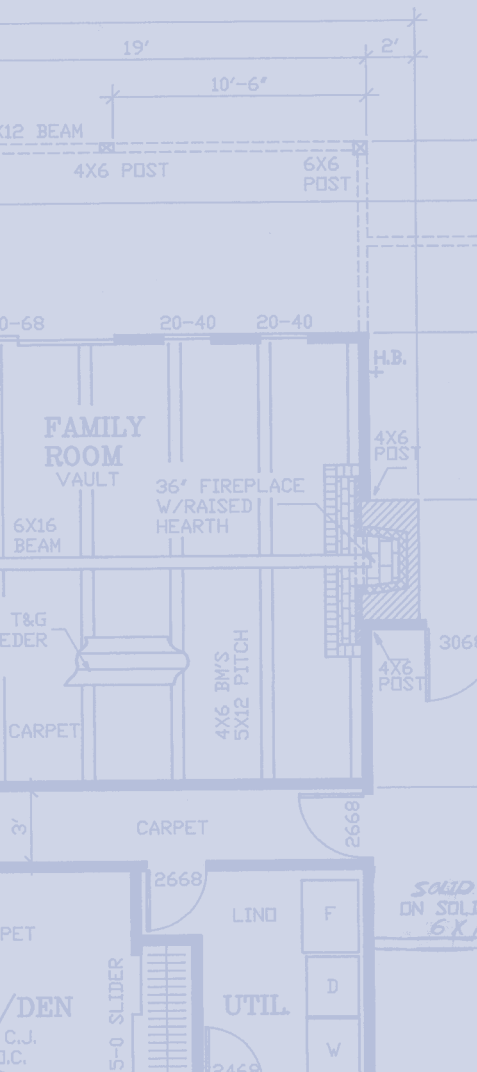
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Mission

The Contractors State License Board protects consumers by regulating the construction industry through policies that promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the public in matters relating to construction.

The Contractors State License Board will accomplish this by:

- *Ensuring that construction is performed in a safe, competent and professional manner;*
- *Licensing contractors and enforcing licensing laws;*
- *Requiring that any person practicing or offering to practice construction contracting be licensed;*
- *Enforcing the laws, regulations and standards governing construction contracting in a fair and uniform manner;*
- *Providing resolution to disputes that arise from construction activities; and*
- *Educating consumers so that they may make informed choices.*

Contractors State License Board

The Contractors State License Board (CSLB) was established in 1929 as the Contractors License Bureau under the Department of Professional and Vocational Standards. Today, the CSLB is part of the Department of Consumer Affairs.

A fifteen-member appointed board elects the CSLB's executive officer, or registrar of contractors, and directs administrative policy for the agency's operations. This appointed board includes nine public members (eight noncontractors and one local building official), five contractors, and one labor representative. Eleven appointments are made by the Governor and four are made by the Legislature. The board holds regularly scheduled public meetings throughout the state. These meetings provide the public an opportunity to testify on agenda items and other issues.

The CSLB licenses and regulates contractors in 43 license classifications that constitute the construction industry. Currently, there are approximately 280,000 licensed contractors in the state of California. The registrar oversees approximately 380 employees who work at the headquarters office in Sacramento and field offices throughout the state.

The headquarters staff receives and processes applications for new contractors' licenses, additional classifications, changes of license records, and license renewals. They also review and maintain records of disciplinary actions initiated by the field offices, provide verified certificates of licensure used in court or other actions, provide the status of licensure and other support services.

Headquarters directs the activities of field offices and initiates disciplinary actions resulting from their investigations. Field office staff investigate consumer complaints against contractors. The Statewide Investigative Fraud Team (SWIFT) focuses on unlicensed activity.

Visit CSLB's Web site, www.cslb.ca.gov, where you can look up a contractor by license number or by name and obtain the licensee's business name and address, license status, disclosable complaints and CSLB legal actions (if any), classifications held, business type, bond and workers' compensation information. Also, applicants can check the status of an application online. (*See page 15 for more information.*)

The same information is available on the CSLB's automated public information line, 1-800-321-CSLB (2752), which operates 24 hours a day. Callers can determine whether or not a contractor's license is valid by entering the contractor's license number. The information provided includes the licensee's business name, license status, classifications held, business type, and disclosable complaints and CSLB legal actions (if any). They may also listen to recorded information on licensing and examination procedures, complaint procedures and how to obtain more information on legal actions, the location and hours of CSLB offices, and current topics such as recently passed laws or regulations. Callers can also order forms, applications and other publications. (*See page 27 for more information.*)

The CSLB offers a variety of publications that guide consumers in making informed choices when contracting for home repairs and improvements. Check our Web site for details or see the order form on page 25.

General Requirements

1. Who can become a licensed contractor?

To qualify to become a licensed contractor you must be 18 years of age or older and have the experience and skills necessary to manage the daily activities of a construction business, including field supervision. Or, you must be represented by someone else with the necessary experience and skills, who serves as your qualifying individual.

The contractor or other person who will act as the qualifying individual must have had, within the ten years immediately before the filing of the application, at least four full years of experience at a journey level, or as a foreman, supervisor, or contractor in the classification for which he or she is applying. The experience claimed on the application must be verifiable and individuals who have knowledge of the experience must certify the accuracy of the experience information provided by the applicant (page 3 of the application).

2. Who must be licensed as a contractor?

All businesses or individuals who construct or alter any building, highway, road, parking facility, railroad, excavation, or other structure in California must be licensed by the California Contractors State License Board (CSLB) if the total cost (labor and materials) of one or more contracts on the project is \$500 or more. Contractors, including subcontractors, specialty contractors, and persons engaged in the business of home improvement (with the exception of joint ventures and projects involving federal funding) must be licensed before submitting bids. Licenses may be issued to individuals, partnerships, corporations, or joint ventures. The CSLB does not issue licenses to Limited Liability Companies (LLC's).

3. Is anyone exempt from the requirement to be licensed?

Yes. Here are some of the exemptions:

- Work on a project for which the combined value of labor, materials, and all other costs on one or more contracts is less than \$500 falls within the minor work exemption. Work which is part of a larger or major project, whether undertaken by the same or different contractors, may not be divided into amounts less than \$500 in an attempt to meet the \$500 exemption. Until January 1, 2005, unlicensed contractors were required to provide a purchaser a written disclosure stating that they are not licensed by the CSLB. This disclosure is no longer required;
- An employee who is paid wages, who does not usually work in an independently established business, and who does not have direction or control over the performance of work or who does not determine the final results of the work or project;
- Public personnel working on public projects;
- Officers of a court acting within the scope of their office;
- Public utilities working under specified conditions;
- Oil and gas operations performed by an owner or lessee;
- Owner-builders who build or improve residential structures on their own property if they either do the work themselves or use their own employees (paid in wages) to do the work. This exemption is only valid if the structure is not intended to be offered for sale within one year of completion;
- Owner-builders who build or improve residential structures on their own property if they contract for the construction with a licensed contractor or contractors. This exemption is applicable only if no more than four of such structures are offered for sale in any one calendar year;

- Owner-builders who improve their main place of residence, have actually resided there for one year prior to completion of the work, and who complete the work prior to sale. This exemption is limited to two structures within a three-year period;
- Sale or installation of finished products that do not become a fixed part of the structure;
- A seller of installed carpets who holds a retail furniture dealer's license but who contracts for installation of the carpet with a licensed carpet installer;
- Security alarm company operators (licensed by the Bureau of Security and Investigative Services) who install, maintain, monitor, sell, alter, or service alarm systems (fire alarm company operators must be licensed by the CSLB); and
- Persons whose activities consist only of installing satellite antenna systems on residential structures or property. These persons must be registered with the Bureau of Electronic and Appliance Repair.

4. Do I have to reside in California to get and keep a contractor's license?

No.

5. Does California recognize contractors' licenses issued by other states or countries?

No. However, California does have reciprocal agreements with some states that recognize the experience qualifications for certain trades. It is only after the Registrar of Contractors has entered into a reciprocal agreement with the other state and under certain conditions that the Registrar may waive the written trade examination for a contractor licensed in another state. Applicants must still qualify by taking and passing the Law and Business Examination. If you have trade experience or a contractor's license issued by another state or country and you want to contract for work in California, this experience may be acceptable. In any case, you must apply for and be issued a license by the California Contractors State License Board.

6. What happens if I contract without a license?

A contractor's license is not necessary as long as you don't advertise yourself as a licensed contractor and never contract for jobs costing \$500 or more, including labor and materials.

The Contractors State License Board has established statewide investigative fraud teams that focus on unlicensed contractors and the underground economy. To curtail illegal contracting activities, these units conduct stings and sweeps which are publicized to ensure maximum consumer education.

Contracting without a license is usually a misdemeanor, carrying a potential sentence of up to six months in jail and/or a \$500 fine, and a potential administrative fine of \$200 to \$15,000. Subsequent violations increase criminal penalties; if there is a prior conviction for contracting without a license, a fine of 20 percent of the contract price of the work performed, or a \$4,500 fine shall be imposed. Also, the unlicensed contractor shall be confined to jail for no less than 90 days.

Felony charges may be filed against those who contract without a license for any project that is covered by a state of emergency or disaster proclaimed by the Governor of California or the President of the United States. Felony convictions may result in a state prison term as specified by the court.

During fiscal year 2003-04 the CSLB filed 1,515 nonlicensee citations and referred 1,057 non-licensees to the District Attorney.

Experience Requirements

7. What kind of experience is required for a contractor's license?

You must have at least four years of experience to qualify to take the examination. Credit for experience is given only for experience at a journey level or as a foreman, supervising employee, contractor, or owner-builder. These are defined as follows:

- A journeyman is a person who has completed an apprenticeship program or is an experienced worker, not a trainee, and is fully qualified and able to perform the trade without supervision.
- A foreman or supervisor is a person who has the knowledge and skill of a journeyman and directly supervises physical construction.
- A contractor is a person who manages the daily activities of a construction business, including field supervision.
- An owner-builder is a person who has the knowledge and skills of a journeyman and who performs work on his or her own property.

All experience claims must be verified by a qualified and responsible person, such as a homeowner, an employer, fellow employee, other journeyman, contractor, union representative, building inspector, architect, or engineer. The person verifying your claim must have firsthand knowledge of your experience—that is, he or she must have observed the work you have done—and must complete the experience certification portion of the application. Even if you provide a certification of your experience, be prepared to furnish documentation of any experience you claim on the application whenever such documentation is requested. The failure to provide this documentation will result in rejection of your application or denial of the license.

8. Are there education requirements for a license?

No. You do not have to meet any education requirements in order to qualify for a contractor's license. However, many community colleges and private schools offer instruction in vocational education. For more information, contact the:

Chancellor's Office, California Community Colleges
1102 Q Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
www.cccco.edu

or

Bureau for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education
400 R Street, Suite 5000
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 445-3427
www.bppve.ca.gov

(PLEASE NOTE: CSLB cannot make referrals or recommendations regarding license preparation schools.)

9. May I substitute any education, technical training, or apprenticeship training for the required experience?

You may receive credit for your technical training, apprenticeship training, or education instead of a portion of the required four years of practical experience. At least one year must be practical experience. You must provide written documentation of any training or education claimed in place of experience. Acceptable documentation includes copies of apprenticeship certificates and college transcripts.

10. How much credit can I expect to receive for technical training, the completion of an approved apprenticeship program, or related college or university education?

The CSLB may credit training, apprenticeship, or education as follows:

A maximum of 1-1/2 years upon submission of transcripts of the following:

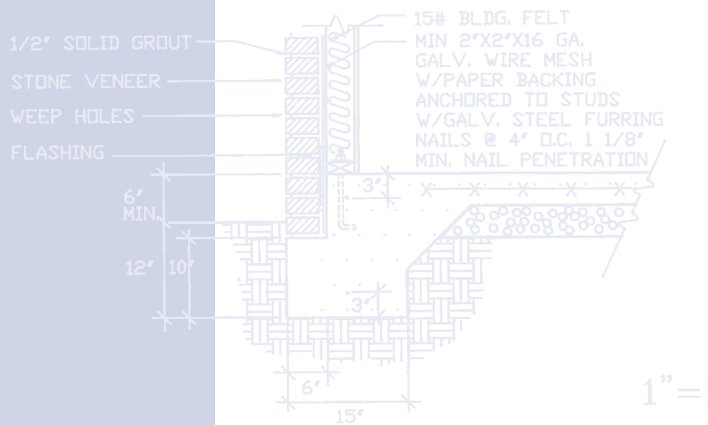
- An A.A. degree from an accredited school or college in building or construction management;

A maximum of two years upon submission of transcripts of any of the following:

- A four-year degree from an accredited college or university in the fields of accounting, business, economics, mathematics, physics, or areas related to the specific trade or craft for which application is being made;
- A professional degree in law; or
- Substantial college or university course work in accounting, architecture, business, construction technology, drafting, economics, engineering, mathematics, or physics.

A maximum of three years upon submission of any of the following:

- A Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship from an accredited apprenticeship program or a certified statement of completion of apprenticeship training from a union in the classification for which application is being made;
- Submission of transcripts for a four-year degree from an accredited college or university in architecture, construction technology, or any field of engineering that is directly related to the classification for which application is being made; or
- Submission of transcripts for a four-year degree from an accredited college or university in the field of horticulture or landscape horticulture for the Landscaping (C-27) classification.



PERIMETER FOOTING @ VENEER

License Classifications

11. What are the contractor license classifications?

The CSLB issues licenses to contract in particular trades or fields of the construction profession. Each separate trade is recognized as a “classification.” You may add as many classifications to your license as you can qualify for.

The CSLB issues licenses for the following classifications:

- **Class “A”—General Engineering Contractor.** The principal business is in connection with fixed works requiring specialized engineering knowledge and skill.
- **Class “B”—General Building Contractor.** The principal business is in connection with any structure built, being built, or to be built, requiring in its construction the use of at least two unrelated building trades or crafts; however, framing or carpentry projects may be performed without limitation. In some instances, a general building contractor may take a contract for projects involving one trade only if the general contractor holds the appropriate specialty license or subcontracts with an appropriately licensed specialty contractor to perform the work.
- **Class “C”—Specialty Contractor.** There are 41 separate “C” license classifications for contractors whose construction work requires special skill and whose principal contracting business involves the use of specialized building trades or crafts. Manufacturers are considered to be contractors if engaged in on-site construction, alteration, or repair.

12. In what trades may I obtain a class “C” Specialty Contractor’s License?

You may obtain a license in any of the specialty classifications listed below. For a detailed description of these classifications, see the CSLB Web site, or consult the CSLB Rules and Regulations in the *California Contractors License Law and Reference Book*. (For ordering information, see *Question 34* on page 18.)

CLASSIFICATION	CODE	SECTION	CLASSIFICATION	CODE	SECTION
Boiler, Hot Water Heating and Steam Fitting	C-4	832.04	Lock and Security Equipment	C-28	832.28
Building Moving and Demolition	C-21	832.21	Low Voltage Systems	C-7	832.07
Cabinet, Millwork and Finish Carpentry	C-6	832.06	Masonry	C-29	832.29
Concrete	C-8	832.08	Ornamental Metal	C-23	832.23
Construction Zone Traffic Control	C-31	832.31	Painting and Decorating	C-33	832.33
Drywall	C-9	832.09	Parking and Highway Improvement	C-32	832.32
Earthwork and Paving	C-12	832.12	Pipeline	C-34	832.34
Electrical (General)	C-10	832.10	Plumbing	C-36	832.36
Electrical Sign	C-45	832.45	Refrigeration	C-38	832.38
Elevator	C-11	832.11	Roofing	C-39	832.39
Fencing	C-13	832.13	Sanitation System	C-42	832.42
Fire Protection	C-16	832.16	Sheet Metal	C-43	832.43
Flooring and Floor Covering	C-15	832.15	Solar	C-46	832.46
Framing and Rough Carpentry	C-5	832.05	Steel, Reinforcing	C-50	832.50
General Manufactured Housing	C-47	832.47	Steel, Structural	C-51	832.51
Glazing	C-17	832.17	Swimming Pool	C-53	832.53
Insulation and Acoustical	C-2	832.02	Tile (Ceramic and Mosaic)	C-54	832.54
Landscaping	C-27	832.27	Warm-Air Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning	C-20	832.20
Lathing and Plastering	C-35	832.35	Water Conditioning	C-55	832.55
Limited Specialty	C-61	832.61	Welding	C-60	832.60
			Well-Drilling (Water)	C-57	832.57

13. Are there any special requirements for contractors who work with asbestos or other hazardous substances?

Contractors who work with asbestos or other hazardous substances are regulated by the United States Department of Labor, Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and the California Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), as well as by the CSLB. These contractors are subject to a number of certification, registration, reporting, and safety requirements.

The following are some of the CSLB's basic requirements:

- Before a license will be issued, every licensee must have completed, signed, and returned the open-book examination contained in the booklet, *Asbestos: A Contractor's Guide and Open-Book Examination*. The booklet contains general information about asbestos abatement standards.
- Asbestos abatement contractors must be certified by the CSLB. To become certified, a contractor must take and pass an EPA-accredited asbestos abatement course; complete the *Application for Asbestos Certification*; pass a comprehensive asbestos abatement exam; and register with the Asbestos Contractor Registration Unit of DOSH.
- Contractors who do hazardous substance removal work must be certified by the CSLB—they must complete an *Application for Hazardous Substance Removal and Remedial Actions*, and they must pass a CSLB certification examination. Any contractor who has a Class "A" General Engineering, "B" General Building, "C-36" Plumbing, "C-61 (D-40)" Service Station Equipment and Maintenance (only those licensees who currently hold this classification), "C-12" Earthwork and Paving, or "C-57" Well Drilling (Water) license is eligible to be certified.

In addition, contractors who install or remove underground storage tanks must hold this certification. CSLB policy currently limits certified contractors doing underground storage tank work as follows:

- General Engineering "A" contractors may install and/or remove underground storage tanks for any purpose at any location.
- Plumbing "C-36" contractors may install and/or remove any underground storage tank that provides service to a building—including storage tanks for service stations.
- Service Station Equipment and Maintenance "C-61/D-40" contractors may install and/or remove fuel underground storage tanks at service stations or any other site up to a capacity of 20,000 gallons. (No new C-61/D-40 licenses are issued for these purposes.)
- General Building "B" contractors may, in the course of work performed under a contract that meets the requirements for the "B" classification (*see Question 11*), install and/or remove an underground storage tank if they have been properly certified for Hazardous Substance Removal and Remedial Actions.

14. Are there any other requirements I need to complete?

Until January 1, 2004, all contractors who engaged in the business of home improvement or who provided goods and services for home improvement were required to obtain the *Home Improvement Certification*. This certification is no longer required. The home improvement contract requirements still exist, however. Please see Chapter 5 of the *California Contractor's License Law and Reference Book* for details.

Applying for a License

15. How do I apply for a contractor's license?

PLEASE NOTE: Applicants with a disability requiring special testing accommodations must complete Form 13E-77, Special Accommodation Request For Examination. (See page 16 for more information.)

Online Information for Applicants

For online information about applying for a contractor's license, go to www.cslb.ca.gov and click on "Applicants."

Topics include:

- *How to order forms and applications*
- *How to study for license exams*
- *Check the status of your application*
- *CSLB processing times*
- *Check the status of a contractor's license*
- *Check the status of a home improvement salesperson's registration*

You must complete the following steps:

- Obtain an *Application for Original Contractor's License* from any office of the Contractors State License Board, by telephone from the CSLB's 24-hour automated public information line, (800) 321-CSLB (2752), or via the CSLB Web site, www.cslb.ca.gov;
- Take the time to read and follow carefully the instructions attached to the application. **All** experience and certifications in support of experience must be submitted **with the application**. No additional experience verification will be accepted after the application has been accepted;
- Complete the application and all accompanying forms in ink or with a typewriter. Forms completed in pencil will be returned to you. Make sure you sign and date the application; and
- Proofread your application for any omissions. If the Board has to return the application to you for any missing information, your license will be delayed.

You may apply for only one license classification at a time if you are required to pass an exam. After your original license is issued, you may apply for additional classifications.

If you are required to take the examination, complete the following steps:

- Submit the application, the application processing fee (\$250), and all required documents to:
Contractors State License Board, P.O. Box 26000, Sacramento, CA 95826
Be certain to include your return address on the envelope.
- Do not submit any bonds or the initial license fee with your application. Upon successful completion of your examination, you will be instructed to submit the required documents and initial license fee. **You must submit ALL required documents together to avoid delays—your license will not be issued until all requirements have been met.**

If you are NOT required to take an examination for any classification for which you are applying, you must:

- Submit an application and \$400 (\$250 application processing fee and \$150 initial license fee) plus \$50 for each additional classification you are applying for;
- Submit a Contractor's Bond or equivalent in the business name of the applicant, and a Bond of Qualifying Individual or exemption statement for each Responsible Managing Officer or Responsible Managing Employee as appropriate. The Bond of Qualifying Individual must be in the names of the qualifying individuals and the business; and
- Submit proof of Workers' Compensation Insurance or, if you have no employees, an exemption certificate (Form 13L-50). *NOTE: If the license is qualified by a Responsible Managing Employee, the qualifier is an employee and Workers' Compensation Insurance is required.*

If you are applying for an inactive license, you must:

- Submit an application, the appropriate application processing fee, and the initial license fee. The same fees are required for inactive licenses as for active licenses. *NOTE: Bonds and Workers' Compensation Insurance are NOT required for an inactive license.*

16. Will the CSLB acknowledge receipt of my application?

The CSLB will send you a letter of acknowledgment. This letter will contain two important numbers: a nine-digit Application Fee Number and a four-digit Personal Identification Number (PIN), together with instructions on how to use these numbers to check on the progress of your application.

Your Application Fee Number, also known as your “receipt number,” will also appear on the front of your canceled check, on the *Notice to Appear for Examination* and on a request for you to submit the appropriate documents and initial license fee. Please retain a record of this number, and use it in all inquiries regarding your pending application.

Enclosed with this notice is a *Request for Live Scan Service* Form (BCII 8016) for each person listed on the application. The person submitting the form must complete the third section (applicant information) in its entirety and take two copies of the completed form to the nearest *Live Scan* station to have his or her fingerprints submitted to the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The *Live Scan* operator will return one copy of the *Live Scan* form to you. **You must keep this copy for the duration of the application process should additional follow-up be required.**

A listing of *Live Scan* locations is available on the Internet at: <http://caag.state.ca.us/fingerprints/publications/contact.pdf>

17. How long does it take to complete the license application process?

Because there are many factors that affect the time it takes to process an application (type of application, workload, vacancies, etc.), processing times continually change. By using your PIN (Personal Identification Number) and your Application Fee Number to do an Application Status Check, you can get information on what date the Board is currently working on in regard to your specific type of application. This information is updated weekly and will give you a good idea of when your application will be pulled for processing.

If no exam is required and all license requirements are met, a license can be issued shortly after being pulled for processing. If an exam is required, you will be given an exam date after the application is processed and considered acceptable (no corrections or additional information is required). Additional time to complete the processing of your application is required after you pass the exam. Your license will not be issued until all requirements have been met.

18. How will I know if my application is approved?

After your application is reviewed and approved, you will receive either a Notice to Appear for Examination, or, if the examination is waived, a request for documents and the initial license fee. Some applications are sent for investigation and, even though you may take and pass the exam, the license will not be issued until the application has been approved and all licensing requirements have been met. Applications which require no examination can be submitted with the Contractors Bond, Bond of Qualifying Individual (if required), proof of Workers' Compensation Insurance, and applicable fees.

19. How can I check on the status of my application?

To check on the status of your application, visit CSLB's Web site, www.cslb.ca.gov, and click on "Applicants," or call (800) 321-CSLB (2752). (Please see Question 16 on page 14 for details.)

20. What happens if my application is not approved?

Your application may be returned to you if it is insufficient or incomplete. You must provide any missing information, make corrections, and resubmit your application within 90 days from the date it was returned. If you do not resubmit your application to the CSLB within 90 days, it becomes void. You cannot reinstate it, and you must submit a new application and processing fee if you wish to pursue a license.

21. If my application is not approved, can you refund my application fee?

No. The fee is for processing the application, whether or not the application is approved. Since each application is filed for processing as soon as it arrives at the CSLB, the fee cannot be refunded.

22. How do I apply for a joint venture license?

A joint venture license is one that is issued to two or more licensees together (sole owners, partnerships, corporations or other joint ventures) whose licenses are current and active. A joint venture license may be issued in any or all of the classifications in which the members of the joint venture are licensed.

To apply for a joint venture license, you may submit your application to the CSLB headquarters office. The following requirements must be met:

- Each of the licensees participating in the joint venture must show its exact business name and license number as it appears in the records of the CSLB;
- One of the official personnel listed on the CSLB's records for each participating licensee (the owner, a partner or an officer of the corporation, but not a Responsible Managing Employee) must sign the application;
- Submit the required application filing fee and the initial license fee;
- Submit the appropriate Contractor's Bond or cash deposit in the amount of \$10,000. The bond or cash deposit must bear the same business name as the pending joint venture. Send the original bond; a copy is not acceptable; and
- Submit a Workers' Compensation Certificate of Insurance if the joint venture is hiring employees, or an exemption form if no employees are being hired.

No examination or public posting is required.

23. When does a joint venture license expire?

The joint venture license will expire two years from the last day of the month in which the license was issued. Each license included in the joint venture must be current and active before the joint venture license can be renewed in active status.

24. What is cause for suspension of a joint venture license?

If any of the member licenses ceases to be current and active or is suspended for any reason, the joint venture license will be suspended.

Licensing Examinations

25. Is there an examination requirement for a contractor's license?

The qualifying individual for a contractor's license is required to pass the written Law and Business and trade examinations unless he or she meets the requirements for a waiver.

26. Under what circumstances is a waiver of an examination granted?

The Registrar may waive the examination requirement if the qualifying individual meets one of the following conditions:

- The person is currently the qualifying individual for a license in good standing in the same classification for which he or she is applying; or
- The person has been a qualifying individual within the past five years for a license in good standing in the same classification for which he or she is applying; or
- Within the last five years, the person has passed both the Law and Business examination and the trade examination in the same classification for which he or she is applying.

27. Are there any additional circumstances under which a waiver of an examination may be requested?

Yes, at the Registrar's discretion, if the qualifying individual meets the following criteria:

- The qualifying individual is a member of the immediate family of a licensee whose individual license was active and in good standing for five of the seven years immediately preceding the application. The qualifying individual must have been actively engaged in the licensee's business for five of the previous seven years, must be applying in the same classification, and the license must be required in order to continue the operations of an existing family business in the event of the absence or death of the licensee.

Special Accommodation Request For Examination

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Public Law 101-336, the CSLB provides "reasonable accommodations" for applicants with disabilities that may affect their ability to take required examinations. It is the applicant's responsibility to notify the CSLB of alternative arrangements needed. The CSLB is not required by the ADA to provide special accommodations if they are unaware of specific needs. To request special accommodations, submit Form 13E-77, Special Accommodation Request For Examination. Forms are part of the application packet and are also available in any CSLB office.

28. If I think I am eligible for a waiver, must I complete the experience section of the application?

Even if you think that you are eligible for an examination waiver, you must complete the experience section of the application to document a minimum of five years of journey-level experience.

All experience claims must be verified by a qualified and responsible person, such as an employer, fellow employee, another journeyman, contractor, union representative, building inspector, architect, or engineer. The person verifying your claim must have firsthand knowledge of your experience; that is, he or she must have observed the work that you have done.

Exceptions—you are not required to document your experience if any of the following conditions exist:

- You are currently a qualifier on a license in good standing in the same classification(s) for which you are applying;
- You have been a qualifier within the past five years on a license in good standing in the same classification(s) for which you are applying; or
- Within the last five years, you have passed both the Law and Business Examination and the trade examination in the same classification for which you are applying, and the license for which you took the examinations was not denied due to lack of work experience.

29. How will I find out if I have to take the examination?

If you have to take the examination, you will be sent a *Notice to Appear for Examination*.

If you qualify for a waiver, you will be sent a notice requesting the required documents and fees be submitted.

30. How soon after filing my application will I receive my Notice to Appear for Examination?

Scheduling of the exam occurs after your application is processed and found acceptable. (See *Question 17 on page 14.*) There are many factors that affect the time it may take to process an application.

You will be scheduled for the exam after your application is accepted. You should receive your examination notice at least three weeks prior to the examination date. *PLEASE NOTE: Some applications are sent for formal investigation. Each application must be accepted AND approved in order for the license to be issued, even if the qualifier has passed the exam.* Please refer to your acknowledgment letter for instructions on how to check the status of your application.

31. Where are the examinations given?

To make the examination procedure more convenient for applicants, testing centers are located throughout the state. The examination sites are located in San Diego, San Bernardino, Norwalk, Oxnard, Oakland, Sacramento, San Jose, and Fresno. CSLB testing staff use zip codes to assign applicants to the testing center nearest their business address.

The *Notice to Appear for Examination* mailed to you will state where you will take your examination; the date and time of the examination; what identification is required; and directions on how to get to the examination site.

32. What are the major components of the examination?

There are two parts to the examination process: ALL qualifying individuals must pass the standard Law and Business examination; in addition, with the exception of the C-61 Limited Specialty Classification, qualifying individuals must pass a second test covering the specific trade or certification area for which they are applying.

33. What does the Law and Business examination cover?

The Law and Business examination consists of multiple choice questions related to business management and construction law. Applicants can find information on the breakdown of the topics covered in the examination in the *Study Guide for the Law and Business Examination* that is sent to applicants along with the *Notice to Appear for Examination*.

34. How can I prepare for the Law and Business examination?

The *California Contractors License Law & Reference Book* is the basic study reference. The book with CD-ROM is available from LexisNexis/Matthew Bender. The cost for the 2005 edition is \$14.50 plus tax and shipping. Call (800) 562-1197, and ask for “CALIFORNIA Contractors License Law and Reference Book.” You may also order online through the CSLB Web site. Go to www.cslb.ca.gov and click on “Services and Publications.” Then, click on “Guides and Pamphlets.” To download the information for free, follow those same steps on the CSLB Web site.

Please note that the *California License Law and Reference Book* is not sold at any CSLB office.

Other suggested study materials are listed in the resource list included in the *Study Guide for the Law and Business Examination*. These additional resource materials include employers’ guides from state and federal tax agencies, and materials focusing on business management and construction law. The study guide is available on the CSLB Web site, www.cslb.ca.gov, or by calling the 24-hour automated public information line, (800) 321-CSLB (2752).

35. How can I prepare for my trade or certification examination?

A study guide for each examination will be sent to you with your *Notice to Appear for Examination*. The study guide (*also available from the Web site and automated phone system*) lists the topic areas covered by the examination, shows how each area is weighted, and recommends resource materials to study.

36. What are the trade examinations like?

All trade examinations consist of multiple-choice questions. You will be informed at the test site about the percentage of correct answers needed to pass each examination. The examinations are developed with the assistance of licensed contractors. Most examinations include questions that refer to accompanying blueprints and/or booklets containing drawings.

37. What should I bring to the examination site?

In order to be admitted to the test center, bring your *Notice to Appear for Examination*. You must also bring picture identification (a current valid driver’s license, Department of Motor Vehicles identification card, or military identification card).

Pencils, scratch paper, calculators and scale rulers will be provided at the test center. No personal calculators, cell phones, pagers, or other electronic devices are permitted in the testing area. All personal items must be placed in a common storage area at your own risk. You are advised to leave all personal articles locked in your vehicle since the test center staff does not watch the storage area.

38. How long does the examination take?

You will be given 2 1/2 hours to complete each examination. Failure to arrive at the test site on time may result in your seat being given to another candidate.

39. What is involved with the computer-assisted testing (CAT) system?

You will be taking your examination on the easy-to-use computer-assisted testing (CAT) system. No prior experience with computers is necessary—the test monitor guides all test-takers through a short exercise to help them feel at ease with the computer.

40. What kind of feedback will I receive?

Test-takers receive their score results before they leave the test site. Successful test-takers are told only that they have passed the examination—they are not given detailed information about the score.

Unsuccessful test-takers are given a statement showing how well they performed in each section of the test. These sections are described in greater detail in the Study Guide for that examination so the test-taker will know what areas to emphasize in preparing to retake the examination.

41. If I fail to appear for an examination or fail to pass the Law and Business and/or a trade examination, may I retake the examination(s)?

Yes. If you fail to appear for an examination, you must pay a \$50 rescheduling fee. If you fail to appear a second time, your application will be considered void, and you will have to submit a new application with new fees. Your examination may be rescheduled one time without a fee if you provide documented evidence that the failure to appear was due to a medical emergency or other circumstance beyond your control.

If you fail the Law and Business examination and/or your trade examination, you must also pay a \$50 fee each time you are rescheduled. You are given 18 months to pass the examinations. If you do not pass within 18 months after your application is accepted by the Board, your application is considered void, and you will have to submit a new application. The void date on an application may be extended up to 90 days if you provide documented evidence that the failure to complete the application process was due to a medical emergency or other circumstance beyond your control.

To file for rescheduling, complete the application on the bottom of the notice informing you that you failed to pass the examination and submit it with the \$50 fee to the CSLB. (Please note any address change on this form.) You will be sent a notice informing you where and when to appear for your next examination.

Examination results are good for five years. If you pass either the trade or the Law and Business examination but fail the other, you need only take the examination you failed as long as you retake the examination within five years.

42. May I review the test questions after the examinations?

No. Test questions and answers are not available for review. You may file a written protest or critique of any examination question(s) after you have completed your examination and before you turn in your examination materials to the proctor.

43. Are there any penalties for disclosing the contents of a state examination?

Yes. Conduct which violates the security of the examination includes providing information about test questions to any school, person, or business other than CSLB examination staff; removing examination materials from the examination site (includes copying examination questions by any means for future use); communicating with other examinees during an examination; copying or permitting your answers to be copied; having in your possession any written material other than test materials provided by the CSLB; or taking the examination on behalf of another applicant.

Penalties for conduct that violates the security of the examination include prosecution on misdemeanor charges resulting in a fine of \$500, payment of damages of up to \$10,000 plus the costs of litigation, and a sentence in the county jail. You would also be subject to automatic test failure; any fee(s) paid to the State of California would not be refunded; and you would not be allowed to apply for any license classification for a period of one year from your examination date.

44. What will I receive to show that I'm licensed?

You will receive a wall certificate showing the name of the person or company to which the certificate has been issued, the license number, the classification(s) held, and the date of issue; and a permanent plastic pocket license showing the license number, business name, classification(s), and the license expiration date. The law requires that you display your wall certificate in your main office or chief place of business. You should also make it a habit to carry your pocket license, especially in situations where you think you might be soliciting business or talking to potential customers. CSLB's publication, "What You Should Know Before You Hire a Contractor," recommends that customers ask to see the contractor's pocket license.

45. How long before I receive those documents?

You should receive your wall certificate and pocket card within approximately one week from the time your license is issued.

What if I need a translator?

If you have difficulty understanding or reading the English language, the CSLB may allow you to use a translator to read the examination for you. The translator you choose must be approved in advance by the CSLB. If you would like to use a translator during your examination, please notify the CSLB in writing. Include your Application Fee Number in all correspondence.

Issuing a License

46. To whom is a license issued?

A license may be issued to an individual, a partnership, a corporation, or a joint venture. The license belongs to the owner of an individual license, to the partnership, to the corporation as it is registered with the California Secretary of State, or to the combination of licensees who are party to the joint venture. The CSLB does not issue licenses to Limited Liability Companies (LLC's).

47. If the ownership of a business changes, is the contractor's license considered to be part of the purchase?

No, with the possible exception of a corporation, the license is not considered part of the business. If the corporation's registration number assigned by the California Secretary of State remains the same, the same license can be used if the license is current and active. The officers and the qualifying individual do not necessarily have to remain the same, although a qualifying individual must be in place in order for the license to be valid.

48. What is the difference between an active and an inactive license?

The holder of an active license is entitled to contract for work in the classifications which appear on the license. While the license is active, the licensee must maintain a current Contractor's Bond, a Bond of Qualifying Individual (if required), and Workers' Compensation Insurance coverage.

If a license is inactive, that is, currently renewed but on inactive status, the holder may not bid or contract for work. Neither the Contractor's Bond nor the Bond of Qualifying Individual are required for an inactive license. Also, a licensee does not need to have either the proof or exemption for workers' compensation insurance coverage on file with the CSLB while the license is inactive. (See Question 59 on page 23.)

49. To whom does the term "qualifying individual" refer?

A qualifying individual, or simply "qualifier," is the person listed on the CSLB records who meets the experience and examination requirements for the license. A qualifying individual is required for every classification on each license issued by the CSLB.

50. What is the qualifying individual required to do?

The qualifying individual for a license is responsible for the employer's (or principal's) construction operations.

51. Can the same person serve as the qualifier for more than one license?

A person may act as a qualifying individual for more than one active license only if one of the following conditions exists:

- There is a common ownership of at least 20 percent of the equity of each firm for which the person acts as a qualifier;
- The additional firm is a subsidiary of or a joint venture with the first; or
- The majority of the partners or officers are the same.

Even if he or she meets the above conditions, **A PERSON MAY SERVE AS THE QUALIFYING INDIVIDUAL FOR NO MORE THAN THREE FIRMS IN ANY ONE-YEAR PERIOD.** If a qualifier disassociates from the third firm, he or she must wait one year before associating with a new third firm.

A Responsible Managing Employee (RME) can only act as a qualifying individual for one active license at a time.

52. Who can be a qualifying individual?

If you have an individual license, your qualifier may be either a Responsible Managing Employee (RME) or you.

If you have a partnership license, your qualifier may either be one of the general partners (who shall be designated as the qualifying partner) or the RME.

If you have a corporate license, your qualifier may be either one of the officers listed on the CSLB's records for your license (who shall be designated as the Responsible Managing Officer, or RMO), or an RME.

If your qualifying individual is an RME, he or she must be a bona fide employee of the firm and may not be the qualifier on any other active license. This means that the RME must be regularly employed by the firm and actively involved in the operation of the business at least 32 hours per week or 80 percent of the total business operating hours per week, whichever is less.

53. Will a conviction for a criminal offense prevent a person from being licensed as a contractor or from serving as a qualifying individual?

The CSLB's applications and other forms include questions regarding criminal convictions. The CSLB may deny a license if the crime is substantially related to the duties, functions and qualifications of a contractor. Failure to disclose the requested information may, in and of itself, be grounds for denial of a license.

Even if a crime is found to be substantially related to the duties, functions and qualifications of a contractor, an individual may be licensed if he or she has demonstrated sufficient rehabilitation. See Rule 869 in Chapter 13 of the *California Contractor's License Law & Reference Book*.

In 2003, the Legislature mandated that all applicants for licenses and home improvement salesperson registrations would be required to submit fingerprints with each application. All new applicants for licensure, including each officer, partner, owner and responsible managing employee; and all home improvement salespersons will have to submit fingerprints.

Fingerprints are not required for:

- Individuals who are currently licensed by the CSLB, as long as they do not apply for any changes to their licenses; and
- Applicants for joint venture licenses.

Please visit the CSLB's Web site for additional details.

Financial Requirements

54. Are there any financial requirements to meet in order to qualify for a contractor's license?

Yes. All applicants for a new contractor's license, other than those applying for a joint venture license, must have more than \$2,500 worth of operating capital. Operating capital is defined as your current assets minus your current liabilities.

55. Are there any bond requirements for a contractor's license?

Yes. It is your responsibility to file a contractor's bond or cash deposit with the Registrar in the amount of \$10,000. In addition, you must submit a separate Bond of Qualifying Individual or cash deposit in the amount of \$7,500 for the Responsible Managing Employee (RME) or the Responsible Managing Officer (RMO). However, the CSLB may grant an exemption from the requirement to file a Bond of Qualifying Individual if the RMO certifies that he or she owns 10 percent or more of the voting stock or equity of the corporation for which he or she is to serve as the qualifying individual.

56. Where do I obtain bonds?

You may purchase bonds from your insurance agent or from one of the private holding companies licensed by the State Department of Insurance. The CSLB does not issue bonds. Information regarding bonds and cash alternatives to bonds is available from the CSLB Web site, the automated phone system, or by mail.

57. How long is a bond valid?

A bond may be issued for whatever length of time you and your insurance agent or bond company representative arrange. Most bonds are issued for a period of one to three years. At the end of that time, the bond may be canceled, or the bond company may request another premium to extend the life of the bond.

58. What is the total amount of the fees I must pay to obtain a contractor's license?

Fees are subject to change. Current fees are printed on the application forms and notices distributed to you. You may call the CSLB's automated phone system or check the Web site to verify the fees. Currently, it costs a total of \$400 in fees to obtain a contractor's license for one classification. This amount includes both the non-refundable application processing fee and the two-year initial license fee.

59. Do I need to be concerned about Workers' Compensation Insurance?

All contractors are required to present proof of workers' compensation insurance coverage as a condition of licensure, to maintain a license, to activate an inactive license, or to renew a license, unless they are exempt from this requirement. Contractors who do not have employees working for them are exempt from the requirement for workers' compensation insurance, but they will be required to file a certification of this exemption with the Registrar. If the license is qualified by a Responsible Managing Employee (RME), an exemption certificate cannot be submitted. Neither the proof of coverage nor the exemption is required for an inactive license (*See Question 48 on page 21.*)

60. How long is a license valid?

A contractor's license is initially issued for a two-year period. It will expire two years from the last day of the month in which it was issued. Licenses may be renewed for two years at a time if renewed on active status, or for four years if renewed on inactive status.

Schedule of Fees

Fees listed here are current as of January 2005. Call CSLB's automated phone system, 1-800-321-CSLB (2752), or visit www.cslb.ca.gov, to verify fees and request order forms. (All fees are subject to change.)

Application Fees	Original Application (exam required)	\$250
	Initial License Fee	\$150
	Original Application (no exam required) total fee for one classification ((\$250 application fee plus \$150 initial license fee)	\$400
	Additional Classification	\$50
	Replacing the Qualifier	\$50
	Joint Venture Application total fee for one classification ((\$250 application fee plus \$150 initial license fee)	\$400
	Home Improvement Salesperson Registration	\$50
	Asbestos Certification Application	\$50
	Hazardous Substance Removal Application	\$50
Renewal Fees	Active Renewal (received at CSLB on or before the expiration date)	\$300
	Delinquent Active Renewal (received at CSLB after the expiration date)	\$450
	Inactive Renewal (received at CSLB on or before the expiration date)	\$150
	Delinquent Inactive Renewal (received at CSLB after the expiration date)	\$225
	Home Improvement Salesperson Timely Renewal	\$75
	Home Improvement Salesperson Delinquent Renewal	\$100
Miscellaneous Fees	Re-Examination	\$50
	Reactivation	\$300
	Inactivation (no charge if pocket card is returned)	\$11
	Additional Pocket/Wall Certificates each	\$11
	Certified License History for licensed or unlicensed contractor, per name researched	\$67
	Certified License History for registered or unregistered Home Improvement Salesperson, per name researched	\$67
	General Status Letter	\$8
	Bond Status Letter	\$8
	Copies of Public Documents	\$.10 per page
	Certified Copies of Public Documents	\$2 plus \$.10 per page

CSLB Publication Order Form



You can order the free publications listed below from our Web site, www.cslb.ca.gov, where an order form and selected publications are available online, or call CSLB's automated phone system at (800) 321-CSLB (2752).

You can also fax this form to (916) 255-1395, or mail it to:

CSLB Publications, P. O. Box 26000, Sacramento, CA 95826

QUANTITY

Booklets

- _____ *Before You Dive Into Swimming Pool Construction*
- _____ *Blueprint for Becoming a California Licensed Contractor*
- _____ *Consumer Guide to Asbestos*
- _____ *Description of Classifications*
- _____ *Home Improvement Contracts: Putting the Pieces Together*
- _____ *What You Should Know Before You Hire a Contractor*

Pamphlets

- _____ *Advertising Guidelines for Contractors*
- _____ *After a Disaster*
- _____ *Building Your Career as a Licensed Contractor (English, Spanish)*
- _____ *Consumer Guide to Filing Construction Complaints (English, Spanish)*
- _____ *Consumer Guide to Filing a Small Claims Court Construction Claim*
- _____ *Guide to Contractor License Bonds*
- _____ *Homeowner's Guide to Preventing Mechanic's Liens*
- _____ *Tips for Hiring a Roofing Contractor*
- _____ *What Seniors Should Know Before Hiring a Contractor (English, Spanish)*
- _____ *What You Should Know Before You Hire a Contractor (English, Spanish)*

Name: _____
Street Address: _____

TO MAIL, FOLD ON DOTTED LINES AND TAPE EDGES

YOUR NAME _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE ZIP _____

TO: CSLB PUBLICATIONS
PO BOX 26000
SACRAMENTO CA 95826

CSLB's Automated Phone Response System (APRS) (800) 321-CSLB (2752)

You don't need to talk to someone on the telephone or in person to learn almost anything you need to know about construction contractors. The APRS lets you check a contractor's license by calling our toll-free number and pressing a few buttons on your touch-tone telephone. You can get a lot of additional information by listening to the messages recorded in response to the most commonly-asked questions. You can also order many forms and pamphlets through this system.

Consumer Information & Pamphlets

- 41 Order "What You Should Know Before You Hire a Contractor"
- 41 Order "Tips for Hiring a Roofing Contractor"
- 41 Order "Before You Dive Into Swimming Pool Construction"
- 41 Order "A Consumer Guide to Asbestos"
- 41 Order "A Consumer Guide to Filing Construction Complaints"
- 32 How to File a Complaint
- 32 Order a Complaint Form
- 31 Complaint Disclosure Information
- 32 Info about Your Pending Complaint
- 323 Reporting Civil Court Judgments

Documents in Writing

- 332 General Status Letters
- 332 Bond Status Letters
- 333 Verified Certificates
- 334 Copies of Public Documents

Maintaining Your Contractor's License

- 221 License Renewal
- 22211 Bond Requirements
- 22212 Workers' Compensation Insurance Requirements
- 2222 Qualifying Person Requirements
- 22223 Replacing the Qualifying Person
- 2223 Home Improvement Certification
- 22241 Civil Court Judgment Information
- 22242 Family Support Information
- 22311 Business Name Changes
- 223121 Adding a Classification
- 223122 Adding a Certification
- 22313 Officer Changes
- 223141 Inactivating a License
- 223142 Reactivating a License
- 223143 Canceling a License
- 2232 License Business Structure
- 224 Laws and Classification Information
- 241 How to Resolve a Complaint
- 242 Types of Complaints
- 243 Complaint Disclosure
- 244 SWIFT Info (Report Unlicensed Activity)

Checking a contractor's license on APRS

To check a contractor's license, call (800) 321-2752. When the system answers, press 1. You will be asked to enter the contractor's license number (up to six numbers and no letters).

Get information 24/7 on APRS

For information on the topics below, call (800) 321-2752. When the system answers, press the keys listed for the category of your choice. After most recordings you'll have an opportunity to order related forms or pamphlets.

Applying for a Contractor's License

- 211 Who Needs a License?
- 212 Classification Information
- 214 Fingerprinting Information
- 2131 Application Requirements
- 2132 Exam Information
- 2133 Waiver of Exam Information
- 2134 License Issuance Information

Ordering Forms for License Maintenance

- 2311 or 2321 Order Original Application for Contractors License
- 2311 or 2321 Order Condensed Version of an Original Application
- 2311 or 2321 Order Additional Classification Application
- 2311 or 2321 Order Replace the Qualifier Application
- 2311 or 2321 Order Asbestos Removal Certification Application
- 2311 or 2321 Order Hazardous Removal Certification Application
- 232 Order Renewal Application
- 232 Order Reactivation Application
- 2312 or 2322 Order Inactivation Application
- 2313 or 2323 Order Business Name/Address Change Form
- 2313 or 2323 Order Officer Change Form
- 2313 or 2323 Order Disassociation Form
- 2314 or 2324 Order Bond/Cash Alternative Forms
- 2314 or 2324 Order Workers' Compensation Exemption Form
- 2314 or 2324 Order Joint Venture Application
- 2314 or 2324 Order Home Improvement Salesperson Application

Contractor Information & Pamphlets

- 42 Order *Asbestos, A Contractors Guide and Open Book Exam*
- 42 Order *Blueprint for Becoming a California Licensed Contractor*
- 43 Order *The California Contractors License Law & Reference Book*

Information for contractors and consumers
is also available on CSLB's Web site,
www.cslb.ca.gov



**BLUEPRINT FOR BECOMING A
CALIFORNIA LICENSED CONTRACTOR**

2005 EDITION