

JOINT NEWS RELEASE

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SuspectFraud.com helps consumers protect their pocketbooks

OLYMPIA – May 21, 2014 – “You pay; so should they. Report unregistered businesses.” State agencies are using this theme to urge consumers to check with the state before hiring a business to do work for them.

Visiting suspectfraud.com before signing any contract can protect you, your property and potentially save you money. The site provides access to tools to verify a business is registered and licensed with the state. Consumers can check to see if a business is behind on taxes, has complaints filed against it or is subject to state enforcement actions. They can also report a business that they suspect is not following the rules.

The departments of Labor & Industries, Employment Security, and Revenue developed the website to give consumers a leg up when it comes to hiring a contractor, working with a business or paying for a service. The agencies are promoting the suspectfraud.com campaign to raise consumer awareness during the months of May and June. The site is available year-round.

“During spring and summer many people hire contractors for outdoor home improvement projects like painting, adding a deck or putting on a new roof,” said Joel Sacks, director of the Department of Labor & Industries. “[Hire Smart](#), and make sure any business that bids for your job is registered with the state and has a good track record.”

Everyone has a stake in tracking down businesses that fail to play by the rules. This underground economy creates an unfair advantage for law-abiding businesses; it’s also bad for consumers.

“Businesses that cheat the system may also cheat you,” said Dale Peinecke, commissioner of Employment Security. “When a company undercuts its competitors by not paying taxes or unemployment insurance, its low bid may look like a good deal. But that can be a sign of someone who will do shoddy work or, worse yet, take your money and run.”

The underground economy takes a bite out of the state’s budget, according to the Department of Revenue. Each year, unregistered businesses fail to report millions of dollars in taxes that would otherwise be used for schools, health care, child abuse prevention and other public services.

“In our efforts to track fraud, we discover businesses that collect retail sales tax but file false tax returns in order to keep the money for themselves,” said Carol K. Nelson, Revenue’s director. “When

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you or I pay taxes, we expect them to be used as intended. Checking suspectfraud.com is one resource to make sure a business is playing fair.”

Those who suspect a business is not registered, licensed or may be undercutting regulations are encouraged to visit suspectfraud.com and file a report.

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