

# News Release

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October 27, 2014

CSLB #14-35

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## Check Out Contractor First: 10 Cited in Simi Valley Sting

*Two have history of unlicensed contracting, drugs found on third man*

**SACRAMENTO** – Checking out contractors before allowing them in and around your home and family has never been more important. When the [Contractors State License Board](http://www.cslb.ca.gov) (CSLB) held an undercover sting operation in Simi Valley on October 15 and 16, 2014, two of the 10 phony contractors previously had been arrested by CSLB on illegal contracting charges and another was in possession of drugs and related paraphernalia.

“We consistently catch people at these weekly statewide stings who are unqualified to do the work and have problems with the law,” said [CSLB Registrar Steve Sands](#). “All it takes is a few minutes to [check](#) the status of a contractor on CSLB’s website or by calling the toll-free number to be sure the person has a license in good standing.”

The sting was conducted by CSLB’s [Statewide Investigative Fraud Team](#) (SWIFT) at a home on the eastern edge of the city, near State Route 118. Officers from the [Simi Valley Police Department](#) assisted during the operation.

SWIFT investigators used [craigslist.org](http://craigslist.org) and referrals from previous cases to find potential illegal contractors, and then called for work bids that included painting, concrete work, and a bathroom remodel.

Projects bids averaged more than \$3,000 – greatly exceeding the



**Illegal contracting suspect awaits further processing after Simi Valley police find drugs and related paraphernalia**

limit allowed under state contracting laws. All 10 individuals arrested during the two-day sting were cited for contracting without license. [Business and Professions Code section 7028](#) sets a \$500 threshold for combined labor and/or material costs before a contractor license is required.

Two of those who submitted bids are well known to SWIFT investigators. Michael David Plato, of Sylmar, has been convicted at least twice for illegal contracting, according to court records. This time, Plato turned in a \$3,390 bid for heating and air-conditioning work, despite never holding a [C-20 Warm-Air Heating, Ventilation, and Air-Conditioning](#) license required for such projects.

Another operator who didn't let the lack of a license stand in his way was James Alexander Marsh of Malibu. Marsh's contractor license was revoked in 2011 while doing business as M & M Construction, yet he continued to solicit work. He was caught at CSLB sting operations in December 2012 and August 2014, and was cited on illegal contracting charges. His bid of almost \$4,000 to perform painting work at the Simi Valley home earned him his latest citation – a Notice To Appear in superior court.

In addition, Plato and Marsh each were cited on a misdemeanor charge of displaying a contractor license number that did not belong to them ([Business and Professions Code section 7027.3](#)).

Simi Valley police officers arrested another bidder on a drug possession charge after marijuana, methamphetamines, and drug paraphernalia were found as he was being cited for illegal contracting.

The drug arrest – and the fact that Plato and Marsh defiantly continue to work without a license – should serve as a warning about the need to check a contractor's background before you allow him or her to provide any construction work at your home or business.

Four of the 10 who were arrested face an additional charge of illegal advertising ([Business and Professions Code section 7027.1](#)). State law requires contractors to place their license number in all print, broadcast, and online advertisements. Those without a license can advertise for jobs valued at less than \$500, but the ad must state that they are not a licensed contractor.

Suspects must answer to illegal contracting charges at 8 a.m. on December 16 and 17, 2014, in [Ventura County Superior Court](#), 800 S. Ventura Avenue, Ventura, CA 93009. ([MAP](#))

## OCTOBER 15

SUSPECT'S NAME CITY OF RESIDENCE	LICENSE CLASSIFICATION	ALLEGED VIOLATIONS
Ivan Fuller <i>Moorpark</i>	<a href="#">C33 – Painting and Decorating</a>	Contracting without a license, Illegal advertising
Nicholas Jon Baker <i>Port Hueneme</i>	<a href="#">C33 – Painting and Decorating</a>	Contracting without a license
Gregory Charles Frasca <i>Ventura</i>	<a href="#">"B" – General Building</a>	Contracting without a license, Illegal advertising

Joseph Ruben Garcia <i>Simi Valley</i>	<a href="#">C33 – Painting and Decorating</a>	Contracting without a license
Arturo Barragan <i>Oxnard</i>	<a href="#">C8 – Concrete</a>	Contracting without a license

## OCTOBER 16

SUSPECT'S NAME CITY OF RESIDENCE	LICENSE CLASSIFICATION	ALLEGED VIOLATIONS
James Alexander Marsh <i>Malibu</i>	<a href="#">C33 – Painting and Decorating</a>	Contracting without a license, Displaying a license not belonging to him
Michael David Plato <i>Sylmar</i>	<a href="#">C20 – Heating, Warm-Air Ventilation and Air-Conditioning</a>	Contracting without a license, Displaying a license not belonging to him
Eugene Frederick Haggerty <i>Simi Valley</i>	<a href="#">C33 – Painting and Decorating</a>	Contracting without a license, Illegal advertising
Jeffrey J. Woods <i>Ventura</i>	<a href="#">"B" – General Building</a>	Contracting without a license
Dominick Frances Frederico <i>Ventura</i>	<a href="#">C8 – Concrete</a>	Contracting without a license

CSLB encourages consumers to always "Check The License First" by visiting [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov) or calling CSLB's toll-free automated line: 800.321.CSLB (2757). Also, visit CSLB's website for [tips](#) about how to hire a contractor and to sign up for [CSLB Email Alerts](#).

The Contractors State License Board operates under the umbrella of the [California Department of Consumer Affairs](#). CSLB licenses and regulates about 290,000 contractors in California, and is regarded as one of the leading consumer protection agencies in the United States. In fiscal year 2013-14, CSLB helped recover nearly \$51 million in ordered restitution for consumers.

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