



*Frank Alexander
Administrative Chairman*

I would like to take this opportunity to address some common questions the Ohio Construction Industry Licensing Board (OCILB) receives regarding a State Contractor's License and how to obtain and maintain same.

A common question received by OCILB is, "Why do I need a license?" The answer is because it is State law. It also means that you are assuring the public that you carry the proper credentials, liability insurance and continuing education. It is a fact that the five specialty trades we license are trades that can blow up, burn down or flood a building. These trades are also known to save lives just as a doctor would. You probably wouldn't go to a doctor, a lawyer, or even a real estate agent who was not licensed. Their licensure ensures they know what they are doing via testing and continuing education. Obtaining a driver's license proves you passed a practical skills test and a written rules test, that you are competent to operate a motor vehicle, and that the State recognizes you as knowledgeable enough and having enough skills to trust you with other people's lives. Does it mean that you will always obey the laws that you learned and will never wreck your vehicle? Of course not, but it does spell out the consequences for not doing so. Getting your license means you know the rules and, therefore, are accountable to obey them. Just like having a driver's license assures other drivers that you carry all of the proper credentials, a State Contractor's License assures others that you have met all of the necessary State requirements.

Does having a State Contractor's License make you a good contractor? Absolutely not. Does it mean that you understand the difference between correct and incorrect ways of doing things? Does it mean that you have demonstrated that ability to the licensing authority? Does it mean that you have undergone continuing training? Does it mean that the public can place its trust in you until proven otherwise? Does it mean you should be held accountable for performing an incorrect job or shabby work? The answer to all of the above is "yes." Having the State Contractor's License demonstrates your capability and credentials and assures the public that you have knowledge of what you are doing.

OCILB also receives calls from licensed contractors saying they hold a license, pay the renewal fee, take the continuing education classes, etc. while unlicensed individuals are working without this overhead. OCILB has investigators who investigate unlicensed contractors upon receipt of written complaints. We are making more progress in this area each day. Callers also indicate that they are not only licensed with the State but also with several cities and counties. There is only one Specialty Contractor's License in the State of Ohio. What you "may" obtain from local city and county building departments is a "registration." If a building department has a registration in place, you are assured that they are not permitting your unlicensed competitors to perform any of the specialty trades in their area. Those building departments who have a registration in place must check for the OCILB license before permitting work. Those who do not have a registration in place do not check for the license and, therefore, may be allowing the unlicensed contractors to work in their area. The State does not have jurisdiction over local building departments. However, we do continue to encourage them to register and check for the license.

To obtain any of the five specialty contractor licenses, you must submit an application to the appropriate section of the Board for approval to take the exam. You must be a U.S. citizen or legal resident alien, be at least 18 years of age, and never have been convicted of a felony offense. Once the application is approved, you will receive a registration form to take the test. After passing the tests (code and business/law), you must submit your passing letter(s) to the Board along with a \$25 fee and your license will then be issued.

Beginning with the upcoming December renewals, OCILB will now be mailing our new "renewal packets." These packets contain all of the forms you need to renew each year, i.e., the Renewal Application, OCILB Insurance Form, and the Terrorist Declaration Form (HLS0036). Only one packet is required to renew all of the licenses you hold and it contains everything you need except your continuing education hours (which are sent to us by the training agency), and your renewal fee(s). The renewal date assigned to your license will always be the same. Your continuing education hours must be taken within your renewal period. For instance, if your license expires September 30, your hours for the next year begin the next day, October 1. If you take more than the required 10 hours in a renewal period, you cannot carry them over to the next year. Every year, by no later than your expiration date, you must meet the following requirements:

1. The completed renewal packet which includes the renewal application, Terrorist Declaration Form and an area to include their proof of liability insurance
2. \$60 renewal fee per license held
3. 10 hours of continuing education

If you hold only an electrical license, the requirements are 10 hours continuing education with at least five of those in code. If you hold one or more of the mechanical licenses, the requirements are 10 hours of any approved course in Business, Health & Safety, Technology or Code. You will need a TOTAL of 10 hours for all licenses held.

Your license expires ON your renewal date. However, if you have not completed one or more of your requirements, you have one year to write a letter to the Board requesting an extension due to extenuating circumstances. After your license has been expired for more than one year, it becomes expired by operation of law and you must retake the test to regain licensure.

Contractors may place their license(s) in escrow indefinitely. While in escrow, you do not have to take continuing education or carry liability insurance. However, you must pay the \$60 renewal fee each year. You must plan ahead to come out of escrow - you will be required to show proof of \$500,000 liability insurance and up to 30 hours of continuing education. Keep in mind that a license in escrow is not an active license and cannot be used as such.

In accordance with ORC 4740, contractors must display their license numbers on all vehicles showing the company name, on company letterhead, business cards, telephone directories (display and column ads only), each job site, etc. Contractors in violation of ORC 4740 may be subject to fines, revocation or suspension.

Each license held can only be assigned to one company. For instance, if you hold an HVAC license and you own two HVAC companies, you can only assign your license to one of the companies and another licensed individual would have to assign their license to the second company.

If you should have any questions regarding State Contractor Licensing, please call the OCILB office at 614-644-3495.