

September 4, 2003

DCA SEIZES 12 VEHICLES IN QUEENS CONTRACTOR STING

The New York City Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) today announced the seizure of 12 vehicles in Queens owned by unlicensed home improvement contractors over a four-week period in July and August. Contractors who had their vehicles seized must pay \$1,000 in fines, resolve any outstanding complaints, pay into the DCA Home Improvement Trust Fund and agree to get licensed before retrieving their vehicle.

"Unlicensed contractors beware," said DCA Commissioner Gretchen Dykstra. "Our cross-trained inspectors in all five boroughs are on the lookout for anyone doing home improvement work without a license. Unlicensed contractors face substantial penalties and we'll continue to seize the vehicles of those who flout the law. Our enforcement efforts will continue, but homeowners can also help by calling 311 and alerting us if they see a contractor working in their neighborhood without a license."

The DCA seized vehicles belonging to the following contractors:

- Kelly Roofing & Robert Kelly Roofing
- Majestic Contracting & Design, Inc.
- Victor Agustin d/b/a V.M.D
- Jorge Construction
- Sony Construction NY Inc., d/b/a/ Sony Construction & Sony Waterproofing
- Abraham's Roofing Corp.
- G.M. Construction
- Mario A. Deras-Lara Construction
- Asjad Mahmood, d/b/a Island Building Construction Corp.
- Wetherall Roofing
- Tarsem Singh
- Nice Construction

By law, any person or business that solicits, canvasses, sells, performs, or obtains home improvement work that costs more than \$200, must get a license from DCA to operate legally in New York City. Home improvement work can be any type of remodeling or repair including: awnings, basements, central heating/air conditioning, cabinet installation, central vacuum cleaning system, communications systems, driveways, fences, garages, landscaping, patios, porches, roofing, storm windows, swimming pools, and terraces.

Although a license does not ensure competence, requirements for contractors to operate legally provide further protection for consumers. License-holders are required to undergo a criminal history check, pass a written examination, have workers' compensation insurance, and post a bond or pay into the DCA Home Improvement Contractor Trust Fund, which can provide up to \$15,000 in restitution to consumers - but only to those who use a licensed contractor.

Last year the DCA received nearly 700 complaints, the most of any DCA complaint category, and paid more than \$330,000 in restitution to consumers who were ripped off by unscrupulous contractors. Complaints include contractors abandoning a job before it is completed, not performing work to industry standards, and more.

To request a license application, file a complaint, check a vendor's complaint history, or to request a copy of the DCA Home Improvement Consumer Guide, call 311, or visit DCA online at www.nyc.gov/consumers.