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## NEWS | SAN DIEGO

## Law firm offers contractors advice on wildfire rebuilding process

Friday, November 2, 2007

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San Diego-based construction law firm, **Scholefield Associates P.C.** recently created a list of 10 "do's and don'ts" to help contractors survive the post-wildfire rebuilding process.

"Because of the problems we saw during the 2003 Cedar fires, we want to help keep licensed contractors from getting into problems with homeowners and contracting laws", said Pamela Scholefield, the firm's lead attorney. "We also want to let the contractors know that they can help educate the homeowners to stay away from the fly-by-night scam artists."

It is recommended that as a minimum, contractors should do the following:

- Make sure your license is up to date before performing any work and show a copy of your license as evidence that you are a licensed contractor.
- Provide names and telephone numbers of qualified references such as previous customers and encourage the homeowner to call these people and speak with them.
- Be sure your contracts are in compliance Contractor State License laws.
- Do not let anyone "borrow" your license to allow him or her to get work. This is illegal, both for you and for the person who is not authorized to use your license.
- Provide a written quote detailing the exact work to be performed, exact cost for the work, the date the work will begin, and the time it will take to complete the work and the payment schedule expect.
- Don't make promises that you cannot keep, such as start and completion dates.
- Don't gouge the homeowners. It is illegal to charge more than 10 percent of your usual rates when doing work caused by disasters.
- Be sure to tell the homeowners that the typical scam used by an illegal contractor to use the license number of a licensed contractor, collect a hefty cash deposit and then disappear.
- Emphasize to a homeowner that only licensed contractors are legally allowed to perform work valued at more than \$500, and that anyone else offering to do any work is breaking the law.
- Make sure the homeowner has appropriate funding in place for your work.

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