



**Shreveport Police Department
Chief Wayne Smith**

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Police warn homeowners of possible contractor fraud following storms

Police Chief Wayne Smith wants the public to know that following a major weather event we often see increased reports of contractor fraud. Here are some tips to help identify those that may be trying to take advantage of you during your time of crisis.

- Question requests for payment in full prior to the project beginning. If a contractor asks for this, you should definitely think twice before doing business with them. It is not unusual for a contractor to request some money upfront. Research the company and demand to see their contractor's license and verify that by looking them up through the Secretary of State's webpage at: lsbc.louisiana.gov. Also contact the insurance company and verify that they are indeed insured. A reputable contractor will never take issue with that.
- Insist on a contract and go over every detail in the contract with the business. It would be a good idea to have a witness present and ask that the witness be able to sign the contract.
- Don't attempt to save money by hiring a friend of a friend or a relative of a friend who can "fix" things. This is especially important if you are having big projects completed. If you do use unlicensed "handymen" understand that you are doing that at your own risk and may never recover your money or get your job completed.

- Most legitimate contractors offer no charge for an estimate, but as always, be cautious. During the inspection, be extra attentive to the contractor's assessment. Some contractors will target senior citizens and perform inspections in places of their homes where the homeowner can't access like attics and underneath the house. This is an easy way for a contractor to "make up" damage that simply is not there.
- Check the Better Business Bureau website and always try to get three quotes.
<https://www.bbb.org/local-bbb/bbb-serving-northeast-and-central-louisiana-and-the-ark-la-tex>
- If you do not follow these steps, it could make your case very difficult to prove criminally. If you feel like you are the victim of contractor fraud, please make a report with the Shreveport Police Department. PREVENTION is key!