

Six signs your builder or plumber is not registered

With restrictions easing in regional Victoria, many homeowners will be thinking about organising maintenance or repairs for their property.

To help keep homeowners safe from rogue operators, the Victorian Building Authority (VBA) has released its top six warning signs for identifying an unregistered builder or an unregistered or unlicensed plumber.

Building a house or renovating is often the biggest investment most people will ever make, so it is important homeowners protect themselves from unqualified and unregistered building practitioners and plumbers.

The VBA's Director of Inspections and Complaints, David Brockman, said homeowners should take basic steps to minimise the risk of things going wrong and costing more money in the long term.

"You need to do your research and ask for some key information up front, so there are no surprises," Mr Brockman said.

"You can check whether the builder or plumber you're looking to use is registered with the VBA and whether they've faced any disciplinary action.

"Having a good working relationship with your builder, building surveyor and plumber is essential and will help you understand how your project is going," Mr Brockman said.

"Establish the rules at the start, ensuring you receive regular progress updates, including photographs, with any variations to plans and budget agreed to in writing by both parties."

In some cases, people will pretend to be registered builders or licensed plumbers and carry out works that require proper training and accreditation.

This often includes the installation of gas heaters or the construction of walls, both of which can have critical safety risks if installed or constructed incorrectly.

Repairing or rectifying non-compliant work can also run into the thousands of dollars, putting added financial strain on homeowners.

In the past financial year, eight per cent of all building complaints and one in ten plumbing complaints received by the VBA involved unregistered or unlicensed work.

"The VBA's role is to make sure that regulated building and plumbing work is done by appropriately registered and licensed people. We are here to keep Victorians safe and to ensure the quality and amenity of our buildings," Mr Brockman said.

The VBA's top six warning signs for identifying an unregistered builder or plumber are:

- No results are found when you type their name into the VBA's ['Find a Practitioner'](#) tool.
- They do not ask you to enter into a written contract before the project starts.
- They ask for too much money up front or at each set payment stage. By law in Victoria, a deposit can be no more than five per cent of the total project cost (for projects over \$20,000).
- They are not prepared to tell you about, or show you, examples of recent work or provide contact details of their former clients.
- They cannot or will not show you their VBA ID card – which details who they are and what classes of work they are registered (or in the case of plumbers, licensed) to do.
- They don't provide you with a copy of their domestic building insurance policy or a certificate of currency covering your property before construction begins.

Victorians can visit vba.vic.gov.au/check to make sure their builder or plumber is registered or licensed.