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The Southern Tier Home Builders & Remodelers Association (STHBRA) is a not for profit organization chartered in 1949 and is affiliated with the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and the New York State Builders Association (NYSBA). Our association consists of professional homebuilders, remodelers, and associated businesses that were reviewed and approved by the board of directors. STHBRA members sign a code of ethics and are required to provide annual proof of insurances. STHBRA's mission is to promote and enhance the benefits of home ownership, serves as a trusted resource for consumers and to foster professionalism through an organized group of ethical members. Our organization's office is located at 31 Lewis Street, Suite 301, Binghamton, New York 13760.

Over the years our association has continued to see a large increase of calls from homeowners that have been victimized by illegitimate contractors. Our struggling local economy has definitely played into homeowner's decisions hiring illegitimate contractors due to their much lower prices. We have been receiving approximately 90-100 calls a year from victimized homeowners asking for help with home improvement projects that have ended badly. To better evaluate and understand these issues we formed a STHBRA Illegitimate Contractor Task Force. This task force worked to put together a county wide registration program that is working to help give homeowners, legitimate contractors and our county, guidelines and accountability.

We have found that most of these illegitimate contractors are small operations that drive vehicles without proper business identification. They do not provide proper estimates and contracts that include their business details. They quote work considerably lower when compared to other businesses. Many encourage cash payments by offering more savings. They don't apply for proper permits; they are uninsured which means the consumer isn't protected. They do not abide by OSHA standards which lead to greater risk of injury on the homeowner's property. Most of these contractors use burner cell phones so they are unable to be tracked down.

Most homeowners are extremely embarrassed and desperate when we receive their calls about projects that have gone wrong. Many projects are started after a large deposit has been paid; the contractor either never shows up or ends up not returning to finish the work and is nowhere to be found. Others have projects completed and the workmanship is very unprofessional and causes damages to their homes. Some of these contractors will be willing to come back and work on the issues but just do not have the skillset to fix the work. Many of these homeowners are elderly and have used their life savings and are on fixed incomes.

Homeowners realize that there are very few options once a project has gone badly. Hiring a reputable contractor to fix the work ends up costing more than the initial project. Those that cannot afford to invest any additional money are left with difficult decisions and many walk away from their home leaving our community with damaged homes in our housing stock.

STHBRA strives to continue to promote home ownership/improvements and hopes to be part of a county program that will better protect homeowners, legitimate contractors and our county.

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