



**State Emergency  
Response Team**



*Joint Information Center  
Disaster Field Office  
Orlando, Florida*

**FEMA**

# Disaster News

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## **NEW WEBSITE HELPS RESIDENTS FIND LICENSED CONTRACTORS ONLINE**

**ORLANDO**-Residents who are repairing and/or rebuilding their homes after the recent hurricanes and flooding have a new tool at their disposal to make their construction decisions much easier.

Consumers can find a list of state-licensed contractors plus a variety of relevant articles and resources by logging on to the Disaster Contractors Network (DCN) website at [www.dcnonline.org](http://www.dcnonline.org). Articles may range from price gouging to mold problems.

Licensure may also be verified through the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation by calling 850.487.1395 or visiting [www.MyFloridaLicense.com](http://www.MyFloridaLicense.com). Unlicensed activity may be reported through 850.488.6603. For more tips regarding hiring a contractor please visit [www.MyFlorida.com/dbpr](http://www.MyFlorida.com/dbpr).

The DCN will be a critical resource in helping consumers guard against hiring illegitimate or unscrupulous contractors. Information is provided on the availability of materials and specific licensing and permit issues. The site also provides a database of materials vendors and labor providers.

The DCN was created by Florida State University along with several state agencies and professional organizations, and is funded by FEMA. As of October 12, 2004, the website has received more than 647,000 page views.

President Bush made mention of the DCN in his October 2<sup>nd</sup> address to the National Association of Home Builders in Columbus, Ohio. He called to their attention the fact that Florida has established an online disaster contractors network to help put homeowners in touch with licensed contractors and with government officials who can help those people who have been hurt by the recent storms.

Rules worth repeating are, never pay in cash or pay more than a reasonable down payment before the work is completed, always check references and make sure the contractor has the necessary insurance to protect workers. State-licensed contractors will be more than willing to show potential customers their license.

The website also provides a means to search for contractors by location and/or areas of specialty. Listings of out-of-state contractors are included; however, no licensing information is available for those contractors.

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The State Emergency Response Team is a collaboration of state agencies led by the state coordinating officer. SERT's mission is to ensure that Florida is prepared to respond to emergencies, recover from them, and mitigate their impact. For the latest information on the hurricane relief effort, visit <http://www.floridadisaster.org>.

On March 1, 2003, FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. FEMA's continuing mission within the new department is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration.

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