

Eco-Tip of the Week for 7-9-17

Use Licensed Contractors to Comply with Green Building Rules

By David Goldstein, VCPWA, IWMD

At the city of Ventura's Fourth of July street fair last week, the BuildSMART trailer presented by the Central Coast chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council did not just showcase environmentally beneficial products. Behind the low-flow shower head and automated irrigation controller, and underlying the linoleum, bamboo and cork flooring was a message. If you use a licensed contractor, you get access to a variety of "best practices."

Licensed contractors meet through organizations like the Green Building Council to share tips for saving energy, conserving resources, and reducing indoor air pollution, as illustrated by the products featured in their mobile trailer display. Because they are accountable to the contractor's licensing board, they also are more likely than their non-licensed competitors to obtain permits and follow regulations.

While most of the products displayed in the trailer were options for high levels of environmental benefit, many environmental features of modern green building are mandatory. Licensed contractors are more likely to build in ways compliant with regulations such as mandatory California Green Building Standards (CAL Green), and to obtain permits from a city or the county. CAL Green is the name for a variety of rules governing matters such as materials, building methods, and mandatory recycling of debris. Additional regulations included in Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations pertain specifically to energy usage, governing matters such as the insulation value of window frames.

Compliance with all those rules and procedures increases costs and can slow work, but the time and cost of contractors doing home improvement right is likely to save their customers time and money in the long run. Even years after a project is completed, unpermitted construction may be discovered by regulators through the complaints of neighbors, during the sale of a home, or by other means, and fines or demolition may be required.

Use a licensed contractor and take an active role in your home improvement project to access the latest in green technology, meet requirements, and give yourself the assurance of proper permitting.