

Homeowner's Guide USA
Ghost Contractors – Ghost Websites
Nightmares In Resident-Contractor Relations

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***References Appear At End Of This Guide**

Preview

This is undoubtedly wording outside the norm of discussion of preventative home fraud. Yet in a very real mystical sense, there are such phenomena as *ghost contractors* and related websites. In this guide, we will consider exactly what these are and how we can expose their seeming *invisibility-visibility*. It is only when we are able to *see* what is normally *unseen* by many unsuspecting residents that we can avoid such aberrations.

Foremost, we can define what *ghost contractors* and *ghost websites* are within the context of this very special homeowner's guide. Then we will detail exposing them for what they are and subsequently avoiding them.

- **Ghost Contractors:** Detrimental contractors who *appear* to residents as morally trustworthy.

- **Ghost Websites:** Websites detrimental contractors use to lure and trap unprepared residents.

Prime Example Of “Ghost Contractors”

Earlier in May 2020, a man was arrested for impersonating a licensed contractor. Although this event occurred in the state of North Carolina, we may find this particularly relative to us as private home decision makers. These sort of contractors are everywhere.

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Most assuredly, we can benefit from being reminded that whether or not a license is required for individuals to engage in home repair and/or improvement, we are daily targeted by dishonest people in that profession.

Notwithstanding the fact, it can be as much to our decision-making advantage to always be clear-headed about this: a license to work in this capacity *is not equivalent to trustworthiness*. Let us be on guard always for not gauging a contractor's reliability by if whether or not he/she is aptly credentialed, but instead – by documented reputation.

This particular contractor [albeit unlicensed] did not begin this insensitive predatory behavior against residents recently. As far back as 2017 he reportedly was compelled by court order [and legal documents he signed] to avoid work as a licensed home repair and improvement contractor. These apparently did not matter since he reportedly continued his fraudulent ways.

To make matters worse, the report stated his wife was in cahoots. Imagine that – a husband and wife team of corrupt contractors. Would anyone suspect the malicious pretense behind such a *darling* couple? On sight, their victims did not *see* what they really were – two dishonest people targeting and victimizing any resident who took them at *face value*. Presumably, on first exposure, residents believed they were honest and caring on a variety of premises. However, it appears that the most outstanding of all – they were *a couple*. Their true intent, however: *Invisible*. At least until it finally *materialized*. In so doing, residents saw them for whom and what they really were: Residential bandits. Or more politely: *Detrimental contractors who appeared to residents as morally trustworthy*.

*The unscrupulous genre of contractor [cross-genders] pervade our country on a daily basis. They exist in every state. Since we are residents with a home in one or more, each of us is ideally positioned to prevent such vile trades persons from invading our space. We do this through having a passion for always being *more knowledgeable* of every new twist in how they operate. We are our first line of defense.

“The art of war teaches us to rely not on the likelihood of the enemy's not coming, but on our own readiness to receive him; not on the chance of his not attacking, but rather on the fact that we have made our position unassailable.” Sun Tzu, The Art of War

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•Detrimental contractors are not *friendlies* to residents. Within the context of home maintenance and improvement, they are *enemies*. Since we are their targets they may as well be considered as *always on the way*.

Subsequently, our best defense is to *always be ready* to effectively deny them funds they think they will rob from us. In short, to be ready for them. This is a partial paraphrase to what Sun Tzu means [but in terms of today's concerns in resident-contractor relations] for us to be in a constant state of *readiness to receive!*

•The focal essence of these resident strategic studies (of which these guides are central) is for us to be in a continual state of readiness. Private home heads are daily targets. Many also become victims because we are lax in this regard. We have no *readiness to receive them*. We are not *studied up* against it. We may not want to duplicate this unpreparedness. These home guides can help.

Ghost Websites

We may want to remain very, very focused as what is shared can prevent us from being lured into detrimental *virtual* decision-making. To refresh our clarity as to the nature of *ghost websites*:

Websites detrimental contractors use to lure and trap unprepared residents.

As we understand that detrimental contractors often appear to us as *worthy of hire*, when we search the internet for contractors, many of their websites are representative. These take on the appearance of reputable websites worth clicking into, but they are replete with *booby traps i.e.* concealed threats to our well-being. When we click into such websites, we can trigger them. The first goes off the moment we open it. Each additional click we make around it is another. But the process is very subtle.

Old Zip Code Trick

Quite a few of these awful websites greet us with a blank space for us to enter our zip code. There is no residential directory by area. For example, let us say our home is in Colorado Springs, Colorado. If the ad read “10 Best Contractors In Colorado Springs,” we would think there should be a listing of these “10 Best Contractors” in our area.

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We can search to see which is nearest us. Then we can research/validate their reputations before contacting. Maybe they are unregistered or registered but scandalous. Maybe not. Subsequently, instead of the listing we expect, we are asked for our zip code. Normally, that area of website is the progression toward the series of other hidden devices.

Succinctly, this ruse is apparently designed to keep us on that website long enough to share info about our location, home, etc.... with invisible strangers. Included – our email address. Our information is now theirs to use as they please. How are we going to ensure they will not sell or trade our information? In fact, what we have shared is now under their complete control. As the saying goes: *“It’s already out there!”*

We do not know who they are [aside from what is advertised] but now they know quite a bit about us, location, and home. Since we have given them our information, we may as well say *hello* to more junk mail – the endless solicitations. Perhaps also invasive banners!

It all began with first clicking into the website then being tricked to remain there by entering our zip code. The old zip code trick. Beware. We may want to exit right away.

2 Crucial Tips

1. *About Us Page.* When we click into the website, one of the first things recommended is for us to search for the “About Us” hover link. As we are well aware, “About Us” is normally not about the litany of services offered or showcasing images of projects. Although we are interested in viewing projects they are taking credit for, this is not normally the place. If they are really that vital to maintaining and refurbishing homes, there would reasonably be a separate area – not “About Us.”

Showcasing the many successful projects would be reserved for a different page. They would have it. Perhaps several pages elsewhere on that website. Most legitimate “About Us” is usually a special public introduction to who they are, why, and what they believe about excellent customer service. It is reserved as a disclosure moment which also includes key personnel. That can typically range from the CEO to an entourage of other executives or most essential staff members.

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If we do not see at least an IMAGE of any of those in charge and a *clearly written, official* service POSITION, we may be in the wrong website. There must be at least a visual of one or more key individuals who coordinate[s] operations of the firm on the “About Us” page. In addition, a clear description of functions in relation. If these are not available on the “About Us” or equivalent page, we may need to get out of there fast. High probability this is a *ghost website*.

2. *Best Contractors*. Like many other residents, we may conduct an independent online search for the sort of contractor we need for our home project. In our search, we are going to see lots of links for a certain number of *BEST Contractors*. These are normally ads planted by online contractor referral agents (who are the *white collar* version of contractors). They offer contractors customer leads in exchange for a fee. It appears that each one of the corrupt elements of these agencies treat each private home head drawn into their lair as just a *lead* – not as a *person* relying on them for noteworthy contractor assistance. It is a form of commercial dehumanization of unsuspecting consumers.

*There have been reports of unscrupulous online contractor referral agencies sharing the same *leads* with multiple contractors whether or not they are aptly skilled, honest, and reliable.

Nevertheless, without knowing these things, we may feel compelled to click on these websites which are advertising *inside information* on a certain number of *BEST Contractors*. Yet, when we do [as stressed earlier in this guide], we notice that some have a box waiting for us to enter our zip code. Once done, we are then progressively presented with requests for us to enter all specifics of our home, the project, personal, and location information.... ONLINE! These are complete *strangers* but the least informed among us treat them as *well-known* and trusted *allies*.

*Today, the more sophisticated have evolved to include listing on their website the number of contractor firms they mention. We click in and there they are. But – when we see one which we want to learn more about, then click, up pops the window for us to enter our zip code – the *old zip code trick*.

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2a. *Ratings*. When we go online searching for contractors who can be an asset to our home project objectives, we are very concerned about their rating. How good are they? Can they be trusted? Who among these seems to be the best option? As if on instinct we check for ratings. But this can be very delicate in that most of what we see may not necessarily be as they appear.

In short, ratings are not usually reliable indicators. We may find it vital for us to note the company then proactively validate its authentic reputation through authorized legal and other reliable public sources.

For example, the Better Business Bureau ratings are often awkward in that we see A+ for businesses *we know* have an exorbitant share of consumer nightmares. Synonymously, there are F or no ratings for other businesses which are also horrendous. That, as it actually is, makes BBB ratings systems far removed from having a respectable level of honest accuracy. We may not want it to be a dependable end source for validating the credibility of contractors. In colloquial terms, BBB ratings system is literally *two-faced*. We may want to check with more reliable sources.

2b. Most conspicuous ratings for contractors are displayed as we visit the *open space* of search engines. Lots of stars. However, what many of us may not know is that a sizable number of websites displaying them are not necessarily accurate.

A major reason is that quite an enormous selection of these are unfamiliar with the operational demeanors contractors they are posting ratings for. These primarily rely on the number of customer *testimonials*. We may not consider the fact that buildings trades personnel (which contractors are) with these ratings usually have free or paid membership with respective websites. The names of these contract firms would not appear otherwise – not in overwhelming majority.

Basically, these are often surrogate websites for contractors. Differently conveyed, these are websites which contractors use to help support their marketing efforts. It follows, if these efforts are scandalous, information which seeps into it about them is of likewise design. Even fabricated *testimonials* which are translated into *ratings*.

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Therefore, such surrogate websites are tainted becoming havens for contractors who appear as trustworthy but are instead home fraud criminals. We may want to search beyond reliance on ratings, alone, since by themselves, they say nothing about the *kind* of individuals and/or entities we prefer to work on our home projects.

Summary

On the overall, among our safest approaches to going online in search of contractors is to always bear in mind that just because they are listed, this does not mean they are honest. There is an apparent delusion that search engines have a policy for excluding predatory individuals and operations. Not so. Search engines do not *weed them out* or otherwise *protect* us from them. We are on our own. We must protect ourselves.

As it is online, so is it in *real-time*. We are our best protectors. Legislation will not hinder unsavory contractors from targeting and victimizing residents. Laws enacted outside the home setting – will not stop them. On a person-to-person basis, each private home head does quite well enacting and enforcing his/her own *laws* governing an effective process for weeding out *undesirables*. Stopping – online and in real-time.

*There are very special guides offered in the reference area below. These can motivate us towards even greater priorities for preventing ourselves from being victims. They are *always* on the way. Contrarily, we can make it our business to *always* be in a state of readiness *to receive them!* *Our position must be unassailable.* For sure, we have quite a bit of *ghostbusting* to do – one after the other. This is our home!

HOME IS THE GREATEST WONDER OF THE WORLD !

**Edited with special assistance from D. Madden*

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Helpful References

More Information About Fake Contractor Ratings Google: “Fake Contractor Ratings”

The Art Of War – Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Art_of_War

Imposter Who Posed As Licensed Contractor Defrauded 50 Residents – Cumulative \$1Million

<https://abc11.com/jorge-alberto-garcia-helen-smith-flores-unlicensed-contractor-jj-home-improvement/6142918/>

Same Corrupt Contractor Up On Smilar Charges – 2019 <https://abc11.com/troubleshooter-unlicensed-contractor-facing-new-charges-in-chatham-co/5350393/>

Who Is This Contractor?

Special homeowner’s guide with special tips for incorporating an application process for contractors. In addition, a unique application is offered for download and printing to this effect. It is known as “*Service Validation Form.*”

Link for download: <https://www.hgrbs-flagship.com/resident-strategic-studies.php>

Service Booklet

This is a special booklet which is also free and accessible online. There is one customized to each state (including the District of Columbia). It contains vital hyperlinks and other invaluable information for validating the legitimacy of contractors working in our county. Once on the website, at the bottom left is the listing of all states. Choose the one in which our property is located, then download the customized Service Booklet.

Link for Download: <https://www.american-homeowners-fast-track.org/service-booklet.php>

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