Include Your CSLB License Number On All Advertising - And That Includes Hats, T-Shirts, Coffee Mugs And Everything Else

A contractor's license number must be included on all contracts, subcontracts, and calls for bid, but the use of one's license number is to be used on more than just contracts. You see it all the time -- companies advertising on the side of vehicles, hats, t-shirts, coffee mugs, you name it. What you don't always see on those trucks, hats, t-shirts, mugs, etc., are license numbers. Did you know you should always see a license number associated with those items? Under California Business & Professions Code Section 7030.5, "Every person licensed ... shall include his license number in: (a) all construction contracts; (b) subcontracts and calls for bid; and (c) all forms of advertising, as prescribed by the registrar of contractors, used by such a person."

The fact is, and the CSLB recommends, that license numbers should be on your business cards, contracts or proposals to contract, vehicles, signs or billboards advertising your company, electronic transmissions, including your website, brochures, clothing items or directory or other listing stating or implying that you are a contractor.

In fact, California law has some very specific requirements when it comes to advertising on vehicles. Under California Business & Professions Code Section 7029.5, "Every C-36 plumbing contractor, C-45 sign contractor, and C-57 well-drilling contractor ... shall have displayed on each side of each motor vehicle used in his or her business, for which a commercial vehicle registration fee has been paid ... his or her name, permanent business address, and contractor's license number, all in letters and numerals not less than 1 1/2 inches high." A contractors' "failure to comply with this section constitutes a cause for disciplinary action." For all other contractors, they "shall have displayed, in or on each motor vehicle used in his or her construction business, for which a commercial vehicle registration fee has been paid ... his or her business name and contractors' license number in a clearly visible location in print type of at least 72-point font or three-quarters of an inch in height and width."

When you do advertise, be it on your vehicle, hat, t-shirt or otherwise, be sure you stay within the scope of your license classification. Under California Business & Professions Code Section 7027.1(a) "[i]t is a misdemeanor for any person to advertise for construction or work of improvement ... unless that person holds a valid license under ... the classification so advertised...." The exception is that a licensed building (B) or engineering contractor (A) may advertise for construction works as a general contractor.

Under California Business & Professions Code Section 7027.1(c), "[a] violation of this section is punishable by a fine of not less than seven hundred dollars ($700) and not more than one thousand dollars ($1,000), which fine shall be in addition to any other punishment imposed for a violation of this section." Additional other punishment that may be imposed includes the CSLB "[i]nform[ing] the Public Utilities Commission of the violation, and the Public Utilities Commission shall require the telephone corporation furnishing services to that person to disconnect the telephone service furnished to any telephone number contained in the unlawful advertising." See California Business & Professions Code Section 7099.10(c). In short, they can have phone disconnected, too.

When you do advertise, while you may think it advantageous to mention that you are bonded, you don't want to do that. You do not want to mention the fact that you are bonded in any advertising because under California Business & Professions Code Section 7071.13 "[a]ny reference by a contractor in his advertising, soliciting, or other presentments to the public to any bond required to be filed pursuant to this chapter is a ground for the suspension of the license of such contractor."

Thus, follow the "better safe than sorry" credo. That is, in addition to your contracts, proposals and the like, whenever you advertise, be it on your vehicles, hats, t-shirts, coffee mugs, or anything else, prudence dictates that you use your license number on all of it. Finally, also and make sure that your advertising does not go beyond the scope of your particular license classification. Follow these rules, and you should be fine.