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## **Attorney General Marshall Warns Alabamians to Be Cautious When Hiring Professional Engineers via Freelance Websites**

(Montgomery, Ala) – Attorney General Steve Marshall and the Alabama Board for Engineers and Land Surveyors are warning consumers to be cautious when using freelancing websites such as Upwork, Fiverr, and Freelancer to hire professional engineers. These platforms permit anyone to advertise their services but may not verify if the advertisers are properly licensed. In some cases, bad actors have falsely claimed to be licensed or impersonated licensed professionals by using their professional seals and signatures, and then provided substandard or unsafe work. When an unlicensed person uses someone else's professional seal, it becomes extremely challenging for homeowners, contractors, or local officials to verify who performed the work or whether the work meets safety standards.

"Anyone can claim to be a licensed professional online, and some are counting on you not to check. Before you pay anyone to design, survey, or draw plans for your home, verify their license. It takes minutes and can save you from a costly or unsafe mistake," said Attorney General Marshall.

Hiring an unlicensed person to perform work on your project puts you and your property at risk. Poorly prepared plans or inaccurate surveys can lead to costly construction errors, unsafe conditions, violations of local permitting requirements, and potential civil liability.

Engineers are licensed in the state where they practice, and they can be licensed in multiple states. Before you hire anyone for service, the Board for Engineers and Land Surveyors recommends verifying that the engineer is licensed in Alabama.

"Freelancing websites allow anyone to advertise services such as professional engineering, surveying, architectural, or home design services but may not verify if the person is properly licensed," said Board for Engineers and Land Surveyors Executive Director Rick Huett.

Before you hire anyone for services on a freelancing website, make sure they are who they say they are and that they are qualified to do the work. The easiest way to avoid scams is to contact the engineer directly at his or her place of business and ensure you are dealing with a licensed professional.



You can verify that an engineer is licensed in Alabama by using the “License Search” feature of the Board’s website ([www.bels.alabama.gov](http://www.bels.alabama.gov)). If you still have doubts, contact the board office directly at 334-242-5568 or toll free at 866-461-7640, and ask to speak with a member of the Board’s investigative staff. Likewise, if you believe you have been misled by someone advertising or performing licensed engineering or surveying services, or if you suspect that someone is misusing a professional seal, report it to the Board’s investigative staff.