

Make Sure Your License Is Active and Findable

Two different checks, and most owners only ever do the first one.

TIME	COST	DIFFICULTY	AUDIT SIGNAL
30 minutes	Free	Easy	license_verified

WHAT WE MEASURED

We searched public state licensing records for your business and checked whether an active license is findable under the name you trade as.

WHY IT MATTERS

This is a **gate**, not a scored item. For regulated and field-service businesses, no seal is issued without it — because a certification that doesn't check licensure isn't a certification.

There are two separate failures here, and the second is the one that catches people.

Your license can be active but unfindable. If your license reads "Robert J. Smith" and you market as "Bob's Plumbing LLC," a customer searching your business name finds nothing and concludes you're unlicensed. So does a marketplace's verification vendor, and so do we.

The financial risk is not theoretical. Many states bar an unlicensed contractor from suing to collect on a contract, and **California lets a customer recover everything already paid** for work performed while unlicensed. That is the largest single dollar risk in this entire guide series.

FIX IT YOURSELF

1 Check it the way a customer would

Not from your licensee account. **Open a private/incognito window, logged out**, and search the public lookup — using the **business name you actually market under**, not just your license number.

Record four things: license number, **status word** (Active / Current / Clear / Expired / Delinquent / Suspended), expiration date, and bond/workers' comp status.

2 Find your state's lookup

STATE	PUBLIC LOOKUP
California (construction)	cslb.ca.gov → Check a License
California (other professions)	search.dca.ca.gov
Florida	myfloridalicense.com
Texas	tdlr.texas.gov/LicenseSearch
New York (professions)	op.nysed.gov
New York (DOS occupations)	dos.ny.gov/licensee-search

STATE	PUBLIC LOOKUP
Arizona	roc.az.gov/search
Georgia	sos.ga.gov/licensing-division-license-lookup
North Carolina	nclbgc.org/license-search
Washington	secure.lni.wa.gov/verify
Illinois	idfpr.illinois.gov/checklicense.html
Ohio	elicense4.com.ohio.gov

For any other state, use the free U.S. Department of Labor tool: careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Training/find-licenses.aspx — pick your occupation and state and it returns the actual licensing agency.

Only trust .gov sites. There's a large ecosystem of scraper sites mirroring board data — they're frequently stale and they are not the record.

3 Know the traps in your state

Licensing is state- and often city-level, and several big states surprise people:

- **New York has no statewide general-contractor license.** It's municipal — NYC's Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, and Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Rockland and Putnam each run their own.
- **Texas has no state general-contractor license.** TDLR covers electricians and HVAC; plumbers are a separate board.
- **Illinois has no state GC license.** Roofers and plumbers are state-licensed; general contracting is municipal.
- **Ohio's state license covers only five trades** — electrical, HVAC, refrigeration, plumbing, hydronics. Everything else is city or county.

If you search a state board and find nothing, you may be looking in the wrong place, not unlicensed.

4 Fix a name mismatch

If your license is under a personal name and you trade under a business name, contact the board and ask how to add the DBA or business entity to the public record. Most boards allow this.

Meanwhile, **put your license number in plain text on your website** — footer of every page, and on your contact page.

`Ohio License #12345` lets a customer verify you in one search.

5 Fix a lapse immediately

1. Screenshot the current public record.
2. **Call the board** — don't email. Ask exactly what's owed and what's missing (fees? continuing education? bond? workers' comp certificate?), and whether a retroactive or grace provision applies.
3. Pay by a method that gives you a same-day receipt.
4. **Stop performing licensed work until the status flips.** This is where the disgorgement risk lives.
5. Re-check the public lookup in 3–10 business days and screenshot again.
6. **Notify anyone holding your credential on file** — general contractors, property managers, platforms. Their stale copy is what they'll act on.

Many states have a grace window. California, for example, requires retroactive reinstatement if a complete renewal arrives within **90 days** of expiration — which closes the licensure gap entirely. The delinquent fee still applies.

6 Clear any unsatisfied judgment

An unresolved civil judgment can suspend your license independently of renewal. Boards typically require an Acknowledgment of Satisfaction, a documented payment plan, a court-endorsed appeal with a stay, or bankruptcy documentation.

See *Check Your Public Court Records* — this is the link between the two.

CHECK YOUR WORK

- ☐ You've checked the public lookup logged out, in a private window.
- ☐ Your business name — not just your license number — returns your license.
- ☐ Status is Active/Current, and the expiration date is in the future.
- ☐ Your license number is in plain text on your website.
- ☐ Renewal dates are in your calendar with 60 days' notice.
- ☐ No unsatisfied judgment is sitting against your license.

COMMON MISTAKES

- **Working while lapsed.** Multiple states let the customer recover everything paid.
- **Relying on the renewal notice.** Address changes and spam filters kill it. Calendar it yourself.
- **A name mismatch.** Functionally identical to no license, from the customer's side.
- **Assuming your internal account status matches the public record.** They lag, and sometimes disagree.

This fix is free. You can earn and keep any Agenarys Seal tier — including Platinum — without paying Agenarys anything beyond the audit itself. If you would rather have help doing it, we sell that. We never sell passage.

SOURCES & FURTHER READING

State licensing board public lookups (see table)

CareerOneStop License Finder (U.S. Dept. of Labor): careeronestop.org

California Bus. & Prof. Code § 7031; CSLB renewal and judgment resolution guidance

LEGAL INFORMATION

This guide provides general information, not legal advice. Laws and policies change. Confirm current requirements with qualified counsel before acting.