

Finding of N.J.A.C. 13:45A-16.2(a)6v violation upheld; total recovery under the Consumer Fraud Act for compensatory damages in small claims division court may not exceed \$1,000; judgment reduced to limit. *Wisser v. Kaufman Carpet Co., Inc.*, 188 N.J.Super. 574, 458 A.2d 119 (App.Div.1983).

Violation of Consumer Fraud Act. *Swiss v. Williams*, 184 N.J.Super. 243, 445 A.2d 486 (Dist. Ct. of Mercer Co.1982).

SUBCHAPTER 17. HOME IMPROVEMENT CONTRACTOR REGISTRATION

Authority

N.J.S.A. 56:8-1 et seq., specifically N.J.S.A. 56:8-152.

Source and Effective Date

R.2004 d.418, effective November 1, 2004
(operative November 9, 2004).

See: 36 N.J.R. 3506(a), 36 N.J.R. 4984(a).

Public Notice: Implementation of Home Improvement Contractor Registration Regulation, effective December 31, 2005. See: 37 N.J.R. 87(a).

13:45A-17.1 Purpose and scope

(a) The purpose of the rules in this subchapter is to implement the provisions of the Consumer Fraud Act, N.J.S.A. 56:8-1 et seq. as amended by P.L. 2004, c.16 (N.J.S.A. 56:8-136 et seq.) by providing procedures for the regulation of home improvement contractors and establishing standards to facilitate enforcement of the requirements of the Act. The rules establish the Division's registration procedures for those persons who fall under the requirements of this law.

(b) These rules shall apply to home improvement contractors in this State unless otherwise exempt under N.J.A.C. 13:45A-17.4.

13:45A-17.2 Definitions

The following words and terms, as used in this subchapter, shall have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

“Advertise” means to communicate to the public by means of any print, electronic or any other media, including, but not limited to, newspapers, magazines, periodicals, journals, circulars, flyers, business cards, signs, radio, telephone, facsimile machine, television, computer or the Internet. “Advertise” includes having a person's name in a classified advertisement or directory in this State under any classification of home improvement as defined in this section but does not include simple residential alphabetical listings in standard telephone directories.

“Director” means the Director of the Division of Consumer Affairs.

“Division” means the Division of Consumer Affairs in the Department of Law and Public Safety.

“Employee” means employee as defined in N.J.A.C. 18:35-7.1.

“Home improvement” means the remodeling, altering, painting, repairing, renovating, restoring, moving, demolishing, or modernizing of residential or noncommercial property or the making of additions thereto, and includes, but is not limited to, the construction, installation, replacement, improvement, or repair of driveways, sidewalks, swimming pools, terraces, patios, landscaping, fences, porches, windows, doors, cabinets, kitchens, bathrooms, garages, basements and basement waterproofing, fire protection devices, security protection devices, central heating and air conditioning equipment, water softeners, heaters, and purifiers, solar heating or water systems, insulation installation, siding, wall-to-wall carpeting or attached or inlaid floor coverings, and other changes, repairs, or improvements made in or on, attached to or forming a part of the residential or noncommercial property, but does not include the construction of a new residence. The term extends to the conversion of existing commercial structures into residential or noncommercial property and includes any of the above activities performed under emergency conditions.

“Home improvement contract” means an oral or written agreement for the performance of a home improvement between a contractor and an owner of residential or noncommercial property, or a contractor and a tenant or lessee of residential or noncommercial property, if the tenant or lessee is to be obligated for the payment of home improvements made in, to, or upon such property, and includes all agreements under which the contractor is to perform labor or render services for home improvements, or furnish materials in connection therewith.

“Home improvement contractor” or “contractor” means a person engaged in the business of making or selling home improvements and includes corporations, partnerships, associations and any other form of business organization or entity, and their officers, representatives, agents and employees.

“Residential or non-commercial property” means a structure used, in whole or in substantial part, as a home or place of residence by any natural person, whether or not a single or multi-unit structure, and that part of the lot or site on which it is situated and which is devoted to the residential use of the structure, and includes all appurtenant structures.

13:45A-17.3 Registration required

(a) Unless exempt under N.J.A.C. 13:45A-17.4:

1. No person shall engage in the business of making or selling home improvements in this State unless registered with the Division in accordance with this subchapter; and

2. No person shall advertise indicating that the person is a contractor in this State unless the person is registered with the Division in accordance with this subchapter.

(b) Unless exempt under N.J.A.C. 13:45A-17.4, contractors hired by other contractors to make or sell any home improvements shall register with the Division in accordance with this subchapter.

(c) Officers and employees of a registered home improvement contractor shall not be required to register separately from the registered business entity provided that the officers and employees sell or make home improvements solely within their respective scopes of performance for that registered business entity.

(d) Officers and employees of a home improvement contractor that is exempt under N.J.A.C. 13:45A-17.4 shall not be required to register provided that the officers and employees sell or make home improvements solely within their respective scopes of performance for that exempt business entity.

13:45A-17.4 Exemptions

(a) The following persons are exempt from the registration requirements of this subchapter:

1. Any person registered pursuant to "the New Home Warranty and Builders' Registration Act," P.L. 1977, c.467 (N.J.S.A. 46:3B-1 et seq.), but only in conjunction with the building of a new home as defined in N.J.A.C. 5:25-1.3;

2. Any person performing a home improvement upon a residential or non-commercial property owned by that person, or by the person's family;

3. Any person performing a home improvement upon a residential or non-commercial property owned by a bona fide charity or other non-profit organization;

4. Any person regulated by the State as an architect, professional engineer, landscape architect, land surveyor, electrical contractor, master plumber, locksmith, burglar alarm business, fire alarm business, or any other person in any other related profession requiring registration, certification, or licensure by the State, who is acting within the scope of practice of that profession;

5. Any person employed by a community association or cooperative corporation who is making home improvements within the person's scope of employment at the residential or non-commercial property that is owned or leased by the community association or cooperative corporation;

6. Any public utility as defined under N.J.S.A. 48:2-13;

7. Any person licensed as a home financing agency, a home repair contractor or a home repair salesman pursuant to N.J.S.A. 17:16C-77, provided that the person is acting within the scope of such license; and

8. Any home improvement retailer with a net worth of more than \$50,000,000 or any employee of such home improvement retailer who is making or selling such home improvements within the person's scope of employment of the home improvement retailer.

13:45A-17.5 Initial and renewal applications

(a) Each home improvement contractor required to be registered under this subchapter shall initially register with the Division by submitting the following on forms provided by the Director:

1. The name and street address of each place of business of the home improvement contractor and any fictitious or trade name to be used by the home improvement contractor;

2. The type of business organization;

3. The name, residence and business street address of each officer, director, principal and person with an ownership interest of 10 percent or more in the home improvement contractor business, including the percentage of ownership held;

4. The name and number of any professional or occupational license, certificate or registration issued by this State or any other governmental entity to any officer, director, principal or person with an ownership interest of 10 percent or more in the home improvement contractor business;

5. Whether the entity, any officer, director, principal or person with an ownership interest of 10 percent or more in the home improvement contractor business has been adjudged liable in an administrative or civil action involving any of the situations in (a)5i through vi below. For the purposes of this paragraph, a judgment of liability in an administrative or civil action shall include, but not be limited to, any finding or admission that the entity, officer, director, principal or person with an ownership interest of 10 percent or more in the home improvement contractor business engaged in an unlawful practice or practices related to any of the named situations in (a)5i through vi below regardless of whether that finding was made in the context of an injunction, a proceeding resulting in the denial, suspension or revocation of a license, certification or registration, consented to in an assurance of voluntary compliance or any similar order or legal agreement with any State or Federal agency. As described above, this paragraph covers the following situations:

i. Obtained any registration, certification or license by fraud, deception or misrepresentation;

(b) Information contained in the application required pursuant to N.J.A.C. 13:45A-17.5 and information contained in the disclosure statement required to be filed pursuant to N.J.A.C. 13:45A-17.6 may be used by the Director as grounds for denying, suspending or revoking a registration. An applicant whose registration is denied or a home improvement contractor whose registration is suspended or revoked based upon information contained in the application or disclosure statement or any amendments thereto shall be afforded an opportunity to be heard pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act, N.J.S.A. 52:14B-1 et seq., and the Uniform Administrative Procedure Rules, N.J.A.C. 1:1, upon written request to the Director within 30 days of the notice of denial, suspension or revocation which shall contain the basis for such action. In any matter in which the provisions of the Rehabilitated Convicted Offenders Act, N.J.S.A. 2A:168A-1 et seq., apply, the Director shall comply with the requirements of that Act.

(c) Except as provided in (b) above, prior to refusing to issue or renew or suspending or revoking a home improvement contractor registration or assessing a penalty, the Director shall notify the applicant or registrant and provide an opportunity to be heard.

(d) In addition to assessing a monetary penalty for any violation of this subchapter, the Director may revoke a registration or suspend the registration for a period of time dependent upon the seriousness of the violation.

(e) Nothing contained in this subchapter shall limit the Director from imposing any additional fees, fines, penalties, restitution or any other sanctions as permitted under the Consumer Fraud Act, N.J.S.A. 56:8-1 et seq.

13:45A-17.10 Reinstatement of suspended registration

A registration that is suspended by the Director may be reinstated upon the contractor satisfying the conditions for reinstatement as determined by the Director and paying all outstanding fees, fines, penalties and restitution, including the payment of the reinstatement fee specified in N.J.A.C. 13:45A-17.14.

13:45A-17.11 Ownership and use of registration number; replacement and duplicate certificates

(a) Each registration number and certificate containing such registration number issued by the Director to a home improvement contractor remain the property of the State of New Jersey. If the Director suspends, fails to renew, or revokes a registration, the home improvement contractor shall immediately return all registration certificates to the Director and shall remove the registration number from all vehicles, advertising and anything else on which the registration number is displayed or otherwise communicated.

(b) The Director shall issue a replacement certificate upon payment of the replacement certificate fee as set forth in N.J.A.C. 13:45A-17.14 and receipt by the Director of an affidavit or certified statement attesting that the original was either lost, destroyed, mutilated or is otherwise no longer in the custody of and cannot be recovered by the certificate holder.

(c) The Director shall issue a duplicate certificate to a registered contractor upon payment of the duplicate certificate fee as set forth in N.J.A.C. 13:45A-17.14 and receipt by the Director of an affidavit or certified statement that the registered contractor has multiple places of business in which the contractor must display a certificate. A registered contractor may not possess more registration certificates than the number of places of business utilized by the contractor.

(d) A registered home improvement contractor shall prominently display:

1. The original registration certificate or a duplicate registration certificate issued by the Division at each place of business; and

2. The contractor's registration number on all advertisements distributed within this State, on business documents, contracts and correspondence with consumers of home improvement services in this State, and on all commercial vehicles registered in this State and leased or owned by a registrant and used by the registrant for the purpose of providing home improvements, except for vehicles leased or rented by a registrant to a customer of that registrant.

(e) Any invoice, contract or correspondence given by a registrant to a consumer shall prominently contain the toll-free telephone number provided by the Division pursuant to (b) of N.J.S.A. 56:8-149b.

13:45A-17.12 Mandatory commercial general liability insurance

(a) Every registered home improvement contractor shall secure and maintain in full force and effect during the entire term of registration a commercial general liability insurance policy and shall file with the Director proof that such insurance is in full force and effect.

(b) The insurance policy required to be filed with the Director shall be a commercial general liability insurance policy, occurrence form, and shall provide a minimum coverage in the amount of \$500,000 per occurrence and that cancellation or nonrenewal of the policy by either the contractor or the insurer shall not be effective unless and until at least 10 business days' notice of intention to cancel or not to renew has been received in writing by the Director.

(c) The proof of insurance required by (a) above shall be a certificate provided by the insurer containing the insured's name, business street address, policy number, term of the insurance, and information assuring that the policy conforms with (b) above.

(d) A home improvement contractor who either does not renew or who otherwise changes the contractor's commercial general liability policy shall submit a copy of the certificate of commercial general liability insurance for the new policy at least 10 business days before the former policy is no longer effective.

13:45A-17.13 Requirements of certain home improvement contracts

In addition to the requirements of a home improvement contract pursuant to N.J.A.C. 13:45A-16.2, every home improvement contract in which a person required to be registered as a home improvement contractor is a party shall comply with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 56:8-151.

13:45A-17.14 Fees

(a) The Division shall charge the following non-refundable home improvement contractor registration fees:

- 1. Initial registration fee \$90.00;
- 2. Renewal registration fee \$75.00;
- 3. Late fee \$25.00;
- 4. Reinstatement fee \$50.00;
- 5. Replacement or duplicate certificate fee \$20.00.

SUBCHAPTER 18. PLAIN LANGUAGE REVIEW

13:45A-18.1 Fee for contract review

Any creditor, seller, insurer, lessor, or any person in the business of preparing and selling forms of consumer contracts, requesting a review of a consumer contract, or writing required to complete the consumer transaction, to determine its compliance with the Plain Language Act, N.J.S.A. 56:12-1 et seq., shall pay to the Director of the Division of Consumer Affairs a fee in the amount of \$50.00.

R.1982 d.221, effective July 19, 1982.
See: 14 N.J.R. 464(a), 14 N.J.R. 767(b).

SUBCHAPTER 19. PETITION FOR RULEMAKING

13:45A-19.1 Petition for promulgating, amending or repealing rules

(a) Any interested person may file a petition with the Director of the Division of Consumer Affairs or with any board, bureau, committee or other agency located within the Division to promulgate, amend or repeal a rule.

(b) With respect to a petition for a new rule, the petitioner shall include his or her name and address, the substance or nature of the request, the problem or purpose which is the subject of the request, the proposed text of the new rule and the statutory authority under which the requested action may be taken.

(c) With respect to a petition for an amended rule, the petitioner shall indicate any existing text to be deleted and include any new text to be added.

(d) Within 15 days of receiving the petition, the Director shall file with the Office of Administrative Law for publication in the New Jersey Register a notice of petition pursuant to N.J.A.C. 1:30-3.6(a).

(e) Within 30 days of receiving the petition, the Director or the board, bureau, or other agency located within the Division shall, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:14B-4(f), either deny the petition, giving a written statement of its reasons, or proceed to act on the petition, which action may include initiation of a formal rulemaking proceeding. The Director or the administrative head of the appropriate board, bureau, committee or other agency located within the Division shall advise the petitioner in writing of the response to the request and shall file with the Office of Administrative Law for publication in the New Jersey Register a notice of action on the petition pursuant to N.J.A.C. 1:30-3.6(b).

SUBCHAPTER 20. RESALE OF TICKETS OF ADMISSION TO PLACES OF ENTERTAINMENT

13:45A-20.1 Definitions

The following words and terms, when used in this subchapter, shall have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise: