

CALIFORNIA ISSUES CITATION TO NEIGHBORHOOD GARAGE DOOR SERVICES*

"A SLAP ON THE WRIST"

By Tom Wadsworth, CDDC
Senior Correspondent



On Sept. 30, the California Contractors State License Board (CSLB) issued a citation against Neighborhood Garage Door Services (NGDS), alleging 10 violations of the state's Business and Professions Code.

NGDS faces a \$5,000 civil penalty and possible suspension of its license. On Oct. 21, NGDS appealed the citation and requested a hearing. Consequently, the case has been forwarded to the California Attorney General's office, and NGDS continues to operate.

The NGDS = GDS issue

The citation failed to mention the likelihood that NGDS is the same company as Garage Door Services (GDS), which the CSLB had banned from doing business in California in 2017.

In mid-2015, the www.garagedoorservice.com website, the long-standing corporate website of GDS, started using "Neighborhood Garage Door Service" as the primary name of the company. This change occurred within weeks of our magazine publishing a cover story that identified GDS as "The Worst Garage Door Company in the Nation."

On Dec. 8, 2017, California completely revoked GDS's contractor's license, banning the company from doing business in the state for five years. The state's case against GDS included 40 pages of specific violations, frequently describing GDS activities as "fraudulent." In spite of the loss of its license, GDS continued doing business in California, only changing its name to NGDS. (See "GDS/NGDS: Changing Names, Same Website" p. 45.)

CSLB changes course

The Sept. 30, 2019, citation is a step back from CSLB's original intended action. As of May 3, 2019, the CSLB had recommended that "legal action" be taken against NGDS. But by September, the CSLB backed off. We asked the CSLB why they had changed their decision.

"CSLB has determined that at this time the more appropriate administrative action for us to take ... is to issue an administrative citation," said Rick Lopes, CSLB chief of public affairs.

The Swails case

The administrative citation stems from a complaint filed on April 30, 2018, by consumer Leon Swails of Laguna Niguel, Calif. In that complaint, Swails had a broken spring on one of his three garage doors. NGDS originally quoted him \$500-\$600 for the fix, but later alleged that all three doors needed work.

The final bill (outlined in the winter 2018 issue of Door + Access Systems) was \$3,747.76. No new doors were installed; the bill covered

only hardware parts and labor and included charges like \$930 for three springs (not including labor) and three pairs of end-bearing plates for \$470 (one pair costs \$15 on Amazon). An independent door technician later inspected the job and reported that Swails was charged for parts that were never installed.

The 10 violations

The 10 violations in the administrative citation allege a variety of failures on the part of NGDS, such as not putting its license number on contracts and/or advertising and doing business under a different business name. Specifically, other business names mentioned were San Dimas Garage Door Repair and Installation, West Covina Garage Door Repair and Installation, and Moraga Garage Door Repair and Installation.

The alleged violations also include making "substantial misrepresentation" in the contract, not complying with the law regarding home improvement contracts, and not providing the customer with various rights. The citation also notes that "end plates were not replaced per contract billing."

"A slap on the wrist"

On Sept. 30, the CSLB sent a letter to Swails, notifying him of their action. Swails told us that he was not pleased.

"The punishment was a slap on the wrist," he said. "They seem to be free to continue business, and this (\$5,000) would be a small cost of doing business for them."

The CSLB citation took a remarkably long time to produce. Swails originally filed the complaint on April 30, 2018, and the CSLB didn't take any action until 17 months later, on Sept. 30, 2019. In other words, it took them more than 500 days to draft 10 violations.

Does NGDS = GDS?

We asked CSLB why they view NGDS and GDS as different companies. Lopes said that Jason Jon Romaszewski (Jason Romo) is the only person on the NGDS license, but his name is not found on the Garage Door Services (GDS) license.

Lopes said, "Without additional evidence tying the two companies together, we have to treat them as different companies." He also stated the need for "clear and convincing evidence that connects people to each of the companies."

However, he also welcomed new consumer complaints or any other evidence that would be convincing.

*NGDS goes by hundreds of names. In 2015, their primary name was Garage Door Services. They are also known by variations of Neighborhood Garage Door Services, Yes Garage Door Service, Five Star Garage Door Repair, Jimmy's Garage Doors, Patriot Garage Doors, Fox Overhead Garage Doors, Global Development Strategies, and hundreds more.

NBC4 investigates

On Nov. 7, 2018, NBC4 Los Angeles aired an investigative report about Swails' case, noting that Jason Romo was employed with Garage Door Services and now runs Neighborhood Garage Door Services.

NBC4's investigative reporter, Randy Mac, flew to the headquarters of NGDS in Carrollton, Texas, and caught Jason Romo getting out of his truck. Mac asked Romo if Garage Door Services had reopened under the name of Neighborhood Garage Door Services.

Most people know the name of their own company. But Romo said, "I don't have a whole lot of answers for you," and he walked away.

NGDS = GDS = F rating

Meanwhile, the Better Business Bureau has given the Carrollton-based Neighborhood Garage Door Services an F rating, warning consumers of a "concerning pattern in consumer complaints." The BBB said that the company misled and/or deceived consumers with 1) discrepancies between quoted prices given over the phone and the final invoice amount presented by the tech, and 2) the "limited lifetime warranty that is being misrepresented to include service charges for repairs, parts, and labor needed."

The BBB adds that one of the company's alternate names is "Garage Door Services." ■

Editor's note: To comment on this story, send an email to the editor at vicki@vjonesmedia.com.

GDS/NGDS: Changing Names, Same Website

These logos were taken from the www.garagedoorservice.com website at various points since 2015. Is GDS the same as NGDS? You decide.

March 2015



The logo on the GDS website on March 15, 2015.

August 2015



The logo on the GDS website on Aug. 23, 2015. Note that "Service" is singular.

June 2017



The logo on the GDS website on June 3, 2017.

October 2017 to 2019



The logo on the GDS website on Oct. 15, 2017. "Services" is now plural.

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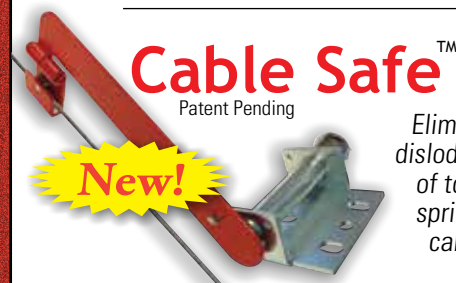
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