



CONSUMER ALERT

Office of Consumer Affairs

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The County of Summit Office of Consumer Affairs Warns Consumers to Watch out for "Storm Chasers"

With the recent heavy rains, high winds and flooding, Summit county residents may be magnets for questionable contractors. "Families and businesses are understandably focused on cleaning up and repairing their homes and stores, but it is critical to be on guard for storm chasers who will take advantage of those affected by the severe storms and tornados," warns Cynthia Sich, Director of the Office of Consumer Affairs. "Hire a local contractor. Check their references. Get things in writing and above all, never pay in advance of work that is to be done."

Consumer Affairs urges storm victims to exercise caution when hiring a contractor, and to heed the following advice:

- Talking through a locked screen door for safety; ask to see the seller's solicitor's license or permit. Resist high pressure sales tactics such as the "good deal" you will get only if you hire the contractor on the spot.
- Call the Office of Consumer Affairs at (330) 643-2879 to check out a contractor and find out how many consumer complaints, if any, have been filed against a particular business.
- NEVER pay cash up front for home repairs such as tree trimming. Have the work done first then pay only AFTER the work is done to your satisfaction.
- Before signing or giving away your money, read the contract you are about to sign, especially if it is asking for automatic monthly withdrawals from your bank account or to pay over time.
- Get a written copy of the contract. Make sure it includes all the company's information such as name, address, telephone number, website and name of the salesperson. Plus, a list of what item(s) you paid for, the amount, and ask about their return or refund policy.
- If you purchase goods or services for \$25.00 or more, you have the right to cancel within 3-days under Ohio's Home Solicitation Sales Act. The law requires that you are given the notice of cancellation in writing. To cancel a purchase usually requires you to write the company.

Residents interested in learning more about safety preparation and tornados may visit the Summit County Executive Russell M. Pry's Emergency Management Agency (EMA) website at <http://www.co.summit.oh.us/executive/emapubliclibrary.htm>.

For more information on home improvement tips, click on the Office of Consumer Affairs link: <http://www.co.summit.oh.us/ConsumerAffairs/pdfs/Home%20Improvement%20Tips.pdf>.