

Consumer Alert

Office of Consumer Affairs



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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County of Summit Office of Consumer Affairs Warns Consumers to Be Prepared for "Storm Chasers" and Others Knocking on Your Door

The last place you should fall victim to a high pressure sales scam is in your own home. It is your home and you are in control, right? Not necessarily. You can not just walk away from a salesperson in your home when feeling pressured. What should you do? Prepare yourself with information and know your rights under the law when door-to-door solicitors strike.

- ✔ Always answer through a locked screen door and ask them to leave if you are not interested. You have the right to refuse to let a salesperson in.
- ✔ Ask to see the salesperson's solicitation license or permit, identification and company literature.
- ✔ Unless you already know the solicitor, do not let them in your home. Door to door selling is a good cover for burglary and other crimes. Call local authorities if you feel threatened.
- ✔ Ohio's Home Solicitation Sales Act gives you 3-days to cancel goods or services purchased in your home for \$25 or more, and requires the company to provide the notice of cancellation in writing.

Consumers should also beware of "storm chasers" who show up after storms have passed offering to do repair work for unusually low prices. "Severe weather may last a short time, but can leave homeowners with problems that remain for years," warns Cynthia Sich Director of the Office of Consumer Affairs. "Do not allow yourself to be rushed into hiring a tree trimmer or signing a home improvement contract before you have done your research on the business."

And then there are the "travelers" who roam the country performing poor workmanship before taking your money and disappearing. Often they offer to do repairs, such as driveway sealing or painting, for a cheap price because they have product left over from another local job. Their products are usually poor quality and it is difficult or impossible to find them when you have complaints.

When considering any home repair work, remember these helpful tips:

Shop around for the best deal. For home repairs, get written estimates from more than one local, reputable contractor. Do not allow a salesperson to rush you into signing a contract.

Demand a written contract with all the details of the transaction, including the contractor's name, address, cellular and landline telephone numbers, total cost of work, materials to be used, and start and end dates.

Limit your down payment and arrange for payments based on the amount of work completed at stages of the project. If the contractor needs money to pay for materials, offer to purchase them yourself. Often scam artists will take your payment in advance and never return.

Before signing any contract check out companies with the Office of Consumer Affairs (330-643-2879), Ohio Attorney General's Office (800-282-0515) or the Akron Better Business Bureau (330-253-4590.)