



# **CONSUMER ALERT**

## **Office of Consumer Affairs**

**For Immediate Release: March 9, 2011**

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## **MAKE SURE YOU DO YOUR HOMEWORK TO AVOID SPRING BREAK SCAMS**

Spring break can be a great time for students and families to get away from the cold weather, studies, and work. So if you want to enjoy the warmer climate, sunshine, and splash around the pool, do your homework!

To prevent yourself from winding up in sub-standard hotels, paying additional fees for items you thought were included, having the details of trip significantly changed at the last minute, not receiving the amenities or activities promised, or, worst of all, paying for a vacation package that does not exist at all make sure to:

1. **Be suspicious of promotions offering free trips or package deals**, especially those received through mail, email, fax or over the telephone. If you receive a solicitation from a company, check them out first before signing or agreeing to give out your credit card number. Contact the Summit County Office of Consumer Affairs at (330) 643-2879.
2. **Get all trip details in writing**. These include total cost (taxes, fees and charges), any restrictions or cancellation penalties, and the exact name, address and telephone numbers of airlines and hotels.
3. **Call and confirm your hotel room reservation and flight information (to and from)**. You should do this a couple of weeks before your trip date.
4. **Purchase from a local travel agency or book it yourself directly** over the Internet or by telephone with hotels, airlines or rental car companies. When using a travel agency not from the area, get their name, address, telephone number, and other identifiable information.
5. **Use a credit card**. If you are paying for anything up-front, using a credit card will give you protection and ability to dispute charges.

Students also need to help protect their parents and grandparents while they are on spring break from scams artists. DO NOT post your travel plans on social networking sites. This can allow unscrupulous individuals to know enough about your trip to claim that money is needed because of a car accident, bail or some other urgent situation and place a phone call to your parents or grandparents asking for money to be wired. So stay in contact with your family by telephone or text message so that they will know you are not in trouble!

### **Lastly, while on spring break remember Personal Safety:**

- Keep track of your personal possessions and baggage at all times.
- Set up a "buddy system". Preplan with your friends to look after one another if drinking is involved. Do not walk alone and always stay with your group.
- Do not bring strangers back to your hotel room and do not give out too much personal information, use common sense and good judgment.
- Be aware that excessive drinking can lead to more instances of violence and sexual assaults.
- Always look and act with self confidence (walk, sit and talk). Be aware of your surroundings and do not allow yourself to be taken to isolated areas or rooms. Be careful of pick pockets.