



# **CONSUMER ALERT**

## **Office of Consumer Affairs**

For Immediate Release: **March 15, 2011**  
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### **Spring May Bring More Than Flowers**

## **BEWARE of Home Repair Scams and Door-to-Door Solicitations**

Springtime flowers can be exciting because we know winter is over, but flowers are not the only thing returning this time of year. Door-to-door solicitors also make their annual return in spring. So dust off your "no solicitors" signs and learn what to ask before you agree to the home repairs or make a purchase or donation from your door step.

While many people who come to your door offering to sell you a service or product are legitimate, you should always be diligent before agreeing to home repair, making a purchase or donating money. Unlike visiting a store where you have the option of comparison shopping or coming back at a later date, when someone comes to your door you are often forced to make a quick decision. If someone comes to your door offering to sell you magazines, trim your trees, or repair your driveway, there are some steps you can take to protect yourself.

### **Tips When Answering Your Door**

- Talking through a locked screen door for safety; ask to see the seller's solicitor's license or permit.
- Consider asking the salesperson to leave literature describing the product or donation being solicited and you can call them to return at a later time to finish the sale. This will give you a chance to do some comparison shopping via Internet, telephone or in-person or call the Summit County Office of Consumer to check out the company at (330) 643-2879.
- Homeowners need to be EXTREMELY CAUTIOUS of those solicitors who offer to do repairs on their property for a cheap price because they have product (asphalt, roofing or painting materials) left over from another job. Many times these "*travelers*" show up offering to do such work. They will do the job with substandard or watered down product or paint, take your money and run to the next county or state and do the same thing. Of course, when you have a problem, they are long gone and the information they provided you on how to contact them is no good making it difficult or impossible for consumer protection agencies to track them down.
- 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.

**AVOID STORM CHASERS** who show up after bad weather has passed. They are similar to the travelers. They may have a business name and temporary address and phone number. However, they are here to get as much work as they can, do it quickly not necessarily well, and move on to the next disaster, leaving you with your own. Again, it will be hard or impossible to track them down.