



**FROM THE OFFICE OF SUMMIT COUNTY
PROSECUTOR**

THE SENIOR NEWS

SAFETY TIP

My office recently handled a case in which John Jute, 40, pled guilty to theft and theft from the elderly and was sentenced to four years in prison for taking a check for \$1,723 from a 74-year-old woman with the understanding he was going to do some work on her home. He never showed up to do the work and cashed the check the same day he got it.

At one time or another, most of us need to hire someone to assist with a home improvement or repair. We may need a new roof, the house may need painting, or we may need some help with repairing things inside our home. Your decision about who to hire should always be made with caution because it is not uncommon to be "ripped off" by individuals you hire to assist you.

Deciding who to hire for home repairs and whether you are receiving a fair price can often be a difficult decision. How can you make the best choice and minimize your chances of losing your money to a con artist? Please consider the following suggestions:

Always obtain at least three separate estimates for the work you need done. Review the estimates with your friends or family members to get their opinions.

Always call the Better Business Bureau to find out if any complaints have been filed against the person or company.

If possible, try to hire someone from a company which has been in business for many years. But still double check with the Better Business Bureau.

Do not hire individuals who show up at your door and try to convince you that you need to hire them. Some con artists will knock on your door and try to convince you that your roof is about to collapse. Other con artists have falsely told homeowners that there have been five burglaries on their street in the past week and will try to frighten you into buying a security system.

Do not hire someone who requires you to pay the full amount in advance.

Do not assume that because the person is friendly and gives you an impressive brochure, that he is legitimate.

Try to get at least one recommendation from a friend who has had a good experience with the repair person. However, do not rely solely on your friend's recommendation. Some con artists will do a good job for one person and scam

everyone else.

If someone starts performing work at your home without your permission, call the police. Do not allow that person to pressure you into paying them for work they were not hired to perform.

If you have doubts about the repair person, trust your instinct and do not hire him.

BURGLARIES IN AKRON

In 2004, there were 70 reports of burglaries and 40 reports of breaking and entering against victims 60 years and older. The majority of these crimes occurred during the day rather than at night. Of the 70 reports for burglary, 41 occurred during the day and of the 40 reports of breaking and entering, 22 occurred during the day.

According to the Bureau of Justice statistics, property crime makes up about three-quarters of all crime in the United States.

Overall, in about 85% of all burglaries, the offender gained entry into the victim's residence or other building on the property.

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TOUGH PROSECUTION!

Benjamin Walters, 24, was convicted of aggravated robbery, aggravated burglary, kidnapping, grand theft and forgery and was sentenced to five years in prison for breaking into an 84-year-old woman's home. He threatened to use duct tape on her, then stole her jewelry and fled.

Ongoing concerns: Burglary is one of the major crimes committed in our area against the elderly. Make sure you have deadbolt locks on your doors, and keep bushes and trees that grow close to the house trimmed to make it harder for would-be burglars to conceal what they are doing from passersby. Keep a phone or cell phone handy near your bed in case of a break in at night so you can call 911 more easily.

Mary Ford, 49, pled guilty to theft involving the elderly and was sentenced to a year in prison after bilking a 71-year-old woman and others who were part of a group who had formed a travel club. The club contracted with the defendant for travel arrangements

for 98 seniors. The victims paid a total of \$32,970 to the defendant who was then supposed to book flights on Continental Airlines and hotel reservations at the Tropicana Hotel in Las Vegas. No travel arrangements were made and the group had to cancel the trip. Repeated attempts to collect the money from the defendant, who eventually moved out of state, proved unsuccessful. Two of the victims felt so bad about what had happened to others that they paid the other seniors from their own money. One victim has since died. The defendant was finally arrested after years of avoiding this charge.

Ongoing concerns: This case illustrates the dangers of contracting with anyone who is not registered with the Better Business Bureau or whose credentials as a booking agent cannot be verified or proven to be reputable. Contracting with individuals rather than established businesses is a risky venture.

Co-defendants Arminda Daniel, 37, and Pedethia Kindall, 44, pled guilty to robbery and were sentenced to one year each in prison for victimizing a 60-year-old woman who was a clerk at a Dollar General store. The pair tried to steal a shopper's purse at the store. The 60-year-old clerk and the shopper's boyfriend came to the shopper's aid and the entire incident was caught on videotape. The 60-year-old

clerk was injured while trying to keep the suspects at the store physically until police arrived.

Ongoing concern: Always be vigilant when shopping about people looking for ways to steal your purse or wallet. It is unwise to put yourself in harm's way, as this clerk did, by trying to restrain suspects. Call police and leave it up to the authorities to make arrests and handle suspects.

Greg Bever, 24, pled guilty to burglary and was placed on community control (probation) for taking items worth \$600 from the closed-in front porch of a 76-year-old man. Luckily for the victim, a neighbor observed the suspect hanging around the victim's home, followed the defendant and called police, leading to an arrest.

Ongoing concern: Never leave items that have any value in plain view. Never tempt a thief, in other words. Although the neighbor did pay attention to suspicious activity, it is a good idea to form block watch groups to learn about your neighbors and whether any of them, such as elderly neighbors, may need particular safeguarding from being victimized by potential thieves, burglars, scammers, or others who may be targeting the elderly.



Use your body as a shield while you enter your access code, so no one can see you type it and never tell your access code to ANYONE (including bank employees, the police, etc.)!!