



ANTHONY G. BROWN, MARYLAND ATTORNEY GENERAL

CONSUMER ALERT

Consumer Alert: Important Information on Door-to-Door Sales Scams

BALTIMORE, MD (January 25, 2024) – The Maryland Attorney General’s Office is offering tips to help people avoid door-to-door sales scams.

Door-to-door scams have been around for years. Scammers may disguise themselves as legitimate salespeople, but they have one goal – to trick consumers. They want to pressure people into providing personal information or purchasing goods or services that they do not want or need.

Common door-to-door imposter scams:

Water Filtration Scams – These scammers may pose as representatives of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or some other organization or company that is providing a “free” service to community residents. They may conduct a home water test to demonstrate how “contaminated” your drinking water is. Then they will talk you into having a home water filtration system installed “for free.” However, their real goal is to deceive you into signing a loan agreement that could leave you owing hundreds or thousands of dollars for a filtration system that you never needed.

Fake Solar Energy Providers – These imposters try to take advantage of consumers who are looking for sustainable power to fuel their homes by convincing them to sign “enrollment forms” or “applications” that allow the imposters to steal your personal information or commit other fraudulent activities.

Fake Utility Representatives – Fraudsters may pose as utility workers who need to get into your home to inspect a “utility emergency.” Once inside, they may steal your property or personal documentation.

Third-Party Energy Supplier Scams – Maryland law gives consumers the right to choose a third-party energy supplier and gives these suppliers the ability to market directly to consumers.

However, deceiving a consumer into switching suppliers is called “slamming.” When companies fail to provide consumers with accurate and complete information to help them make informed decisions, [they could be violating the law](#).

Home Improvement Scams – Be wary of contractors who knock on your door offering low-cost repairs, home improvement projects, or who claim to have extra supplies left over from another project in your neighborhood. These scammers may be quick to disappear if you provide them with any type of payment upfront.

Helpful tips for protecting yourself against door-to-door seller scams:

- Research the business before agreeing to allow any work to be done in your home or on your property.
- Legitimate salespeople will identify themselves immediately and have a photo identification in sight. They will not use high-pressure sales tactics, and they will provide you with written information and the time you need to do your research and make an informed decision.
- Keep your front and back doors locked while talking with any salesperson.
- Before you sign ANYTHING, insist that the salesperson provide you – even if they claim the work is “free” – with a complete contract that includes the terms and conditions, contact information for the company, a detailed description of the work to which you are agreeing, and the total amount you’ll have to pay and when it’s due. Make sure you read these documents, including the fine print, before you sign them, and insist that they leave copies of your signed documents with you before they start any work.
- You should not sign electronic documents on a tablet without first being provided with the entire agreement to read. You should also demand that a copy of the contract be provided to you immediately after you sign it.
- Require that the salesperson provide you with a written quote. Scammers may give a verbal quote with a good price, but then they may demand more money before the job is finished – or they may never finish the work at all.
- Never pay in cash. If you suspect fraud after the transaction, you may be able to dispute charges with your credit card company or stop payment on a check. If you pay in cash, you are unlikely to get that money back if you are scammed.
- Know your rights:
 - **Licenses** - Home improvement contractors and salespersons are required to be licensed by the Maryland Home Improvement Commission. The contractor’s license number, as well as the name and license number of the salesperson, should be printed on the contract that you are offered. Consumers can verify a license through the Home Improvement Commission’s website, www.dllr.state.md.us/license/mhic.
 - **Deposits** - It is against the law in Maryland for contractors to accept more than one-third of the total contract price when they enter into home improvement contracts. If a contractor asks you for more than one-third, that is a warning sign that the contractor may be trying to scam you.
 - **Right to Cancel** - Under the Maryland Door-to-Door Sales Act, you have three business days to cancel a door-to-door sale, unless it is for home improvement work (then you have five business days). If it is for home improvement work and you are at least 65 years old, then you have seven days. If you are not provided

with a written notice explaining these rights, you should not do business with the seller.

- Remember: If someone knocks on your door and offers a deal that seems too good to be true, it likely is.

<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2024/012524CA.pdf>