

Department of Consumer Protection

PRESS RELEASE

Department of Consumer Protection
165 Capitol Avenue
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William M. Rubenstein
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Unexpected Contractors at Your Door? "No Thanks" is Best Answer

HARTFORD, September 4 – Homeowners should be on the lookout for scammers that will use the fine fall weather as an opportunity to make a quick buck on paving, chimney repair, driveway sealing and other scams that can be easily run on unsuspecting consumers, the Department of Consumer Protection said today.

"An old scam that gets played out frequently is the driveway paver who shows up unannounced with a truck load of "extra" paving material, offering a great deal on a repaving job," Consumer Protection Commissioner William M. Rubenstein said today. "After paying out thousands of dollars, the homeowner learns that the materials and work were shoddy, or the job is never finished."

A similar scam is the chimney cleaner who offers a free inspection and cleaning, but then recommends costly repairs, the Commissioner said.

"Beware smooth-talkers who arrive on your doorstep or approach you in your yard with a great offer because they happen to be in the neighborhood," Rubenstein said. "An experienced scammer can sell just about anything to anybody, so your best response is simply, 'No thanks.' Even if your property could use the service being offered, don't deal with someone who found you by driving down your street."

Each year, the Department and local police respond to dozens of fraud complaints, which typically come in after the victim's money was already paid and the scammers long gone. Older adults living alone are common targets, the Commissioner said, and he encourages families to frequently remind elder relatives to refuse door to door offers.

"When someone is pressuring you to get work done immediately, it's because they want your money as soon as possible so they can move on," Rubenstein said. "To be done well and be worth your money, any repairs or improvements to your property should be well-thought out and planned in advance."

"Consumers should take time to find the best contractor for the job – any job," Rubenstein said. "If you believe the contractor is qualified, ask to see his Connecticut Home Improvement registration card and verify that it is current. Get bids from other contractors before choosing one for the job. Get a signed contract with the contractor's name and address, the start date, end date, and costs. And since there's a three-day right of cancellation on home improvement contracts, no work should begin on the same day that you sign the contract."

Vehicles used by traveling scam artists are often unmarked utility trucks and vans. If you see someone soliciting in your area, report it to the Department of Consumer Protection at 860-713-6100 or email the agency at dcp.frauds@ct.gov. You should also call your local police department and give a description of the vehicle with plate number if possible.

If your neighborhood is canvassed by people selling magazine subscriptions, cleaning aids and other items door to door, you should notify your local police so they can verify the legitimacy of the sellers. If you buy, pay by check and make it out to the company, not to a person or to cash. Be sure to get a receipt with contact information.

"When in doubt, 'No thanks,' is always the best answer," Rubenstein said.

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