

Almost every day consumers are confronted with a variety of scams and frauds. Of these is the common practice of Home Repair Scams.

If you are a homeowner, in need of home repairs, or interested in performing upgrades on your home, there's an unscrupulous home repair contractor out there with a plan to gain your confidence and scam you out of your money.

You need to be able to identify a dishonest contractor. Failing to detect a scam artist can cost you thousands of dollars in unnecessary home repairs and thousands of dollars in home repairs still needing to be done.

Educating yourself about home repair fraud, and knowing the tricks in the scam artist's toolbox, is your number one defense against fraud. It is



encouraged that you use more than one single resource to thoroughly research all potential home repair contractors. The more you learn, the better your chances of avoiding a contractor with unscrupulous tactics. Remember, a little knowledge can go a long way.

Con artists know what people want to hear and have made a career of leading their victims away from common sense.

When dealing with your money and your home repairs and upgrades, never allow yourself to be rushed, threatened, or persuaded against your judgment. High pressure tactics are almost always associated with frauds or scams. Committing to a home repair contractor or signing a contract without researching the business is one sure way of becoming a fraud victim. Do a complete and thorough examination on any company or individual asking for money.



VILLAGE OF ROUND LAKE PARK

**Round Lake Park
Police Department
215 East Main Street
Round Lake Park, IL 60073**

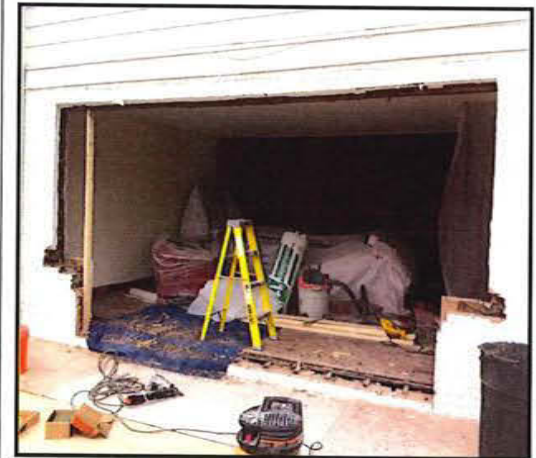
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**EXCELLENCE
INTEGRITY
HONOR**

HOME REPAIR FRAUD PREVENTION



DON'T BE A VICTIM!!

**WITH A PITCH AND A HOOK
YOU COULD FALL VICTIM TO
THE OLDEST GAMES IN THE BOOK**

**WORKING TOGETHER FOR
A SAFER COMMUNITY**

IF SOMETHING APPEARS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, IT USUALLY IS

COMMON TACTICS USED

There are a variety of ways that you can be scammed. Unscrupulous contractors might use some of the following tactics:

- **Bargain Tactics:** They may tell you they have "leftover" materials from a larger job and can perform your job at a discount.
- **Scare Tactics:** They may tell you there are hazardous conditions or code violations which require immediate repair.
- **Insurance Scam:** They may claim to work for an insurance company in an attempt to get you to agree to pay for a repair job that they claim the insurance company will reimburse you for.
- **Free Cleaning:** A heating or cooling company may offer a "free furnace cleaning" as a way to sell you a new furnace you do not need.

CONSUMERS BEWARE

In general, consumers should beware when a home repair contractor:

- contacts you or comes to your home uninvited
- tells you that you need to make repairs immediately or your safety may be in danger
- pressures you to sign papers today or talks too quickly, attempting to confuse you
- tells you that he or she is doing work in your neighborhood and claims to have "extra materials" left over from another job
- quotes a price that's out of line with other estimates
- asks you to pay for the entire job up front
- offers to drive you to your bank to withdraw funds to pay for his or her work

- can be reached only by leaving messages with an answering service
- drives an unmarked vehicle or has out-of-state license plates

TIPS TO AVOID HOME REPAIR FRAUD

When considering a contractor for home repair or remodeling work remember the following:

- Get more than one estimate and get them in writing.
- Don't fall for high pressure tactics or discounts promised.
- Check old phone books to verify the name and address of a business to determine how long they have been in business.
- Read the contract carefully. It should include:
 - the contractor's full name, address, and telephone number
 - a description of the work to be done, started and estimated completion dates
 - total cost of work performed including charges for estimates
 - schedule and method of payment including down payment, subsequent payments, and final payment.
- Do not sign contracts which contain blank spaces or that you do not understand.
- Find out if the contractor guarantees his or her work or products.
- Get lien waivers to protect against claims against you or your property in the event the general contractor fails to pay subcontractors or suppliers.
- Don't make final payments until you are satisfied and all subcontractors have been paid.
- You have three business days to cancel a contract, regardless of a contractor starting the job, selling your contract to a lender, or any other tactic.

EXAMPLE OF RIP-OFF SCHEMES

- Unsolicited door-to-door salespeople with no local connections offer to do home repair work for substantially less than market price.
- A company which lists only a telephone or post-office box number solicits repair work.
- A contractor refuses to provide proof of insurance and references when requested.
- Someone offers to inspect your home for free without authentic identification establishing their business status.
- A contractor demands cash payment and/or full payment before completing a job.
- A contractor asks for a check payable to a third party.
- A contractor offers to drive the homeowner to his/her bank to withdraw funds to pay for their work.

REPORTING RESOURCES

- **Round Lake Park Police Department**
www.rlppd.us
- **Illinois Attorney General Consumer Protection**
www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/consumers/index.html
- **City of Chicago Consumer Protection**
www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/bacp.html
- **Chicago Bar Association**
www.chicagobar.org
- **Federal Trade Commission**
www.ftc.gov
- **Better Business Bureau**
www.bbb.org

BE WISE, OPEN YOUR EYES AND DON'T BE VICTIMIZED