

Senior Crime Prevention Tips

During the spring and early summer, the Crimes Against Seniors Squad always sees an increase in the number of citizens who fall prey to home improvement scams, particularly driveway seal coating scams.

If you, a consumer, did not solicit the contractor who shows up at your door unannounced, then do not do business with that person. He or she may have an ulterior motive, or may have an accomplice who is waiting for the right time to enter your home with the intent to steal your valuables or your identity.

The best safeguards are:

- Make it a rule that you **NEVER** do business with someone you did not solicit.
- **NEVER** give money, **especially cash**, “up front” for a job.
- Call the Better Business Bureau (BBB) before doing business with anyone. BBB can be reached at 583-6546.

Additional Safety Tips for Seniors

If you receive an unsolicited call:

- Remember, you did not ask to be called. **DO NOT** get pressured into accepting an offer.
- It’s OK to say “No thank you!” and hang up.
- Ask them not to call again.
- Request written literature about an offer before making a decision. Be leery of those that can’t provide the requested information.
- Be careful of offers that are about to expire or are for a limited time only. These tactics are aimed at pressuring you.
- **NEVER** send in money as a condition of picking up a prize. Remember, if it’s free – it’s **FREE**.

Never give credit card numbers, social security numbers or bank account information to people you don’t know.

Report all suspicious requests to police. Take your time and do your homework. Always follow your “gut” instinct.

Repair Frauds

- Usually aimed at big ticket items (house, car, appliances).
- Preys on a person’s lack of knowledge and expertise.
- Repairs aimed at hard to get to places such as roofs, crawl spaces, etc.
- Sells a person on a bill of goods that warrants our trust of their opinion.

Steps to Prevent Bogus Repairs

- Be wary of unsolicited contractors – “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”
- Don’t fall for pressure tactics.
- Get several opinions before making a decision.
- Check out a company’s credentials (Better Business Bureau).
- Check the references of other consumers using a company’s service.
- Get a contract proposal in writing outlining the conditions of work and terms of payment.
- Deal with licensed and insured contractors.
- NEVER pay for a job in advance – Negotiate a payment schedule and make the last payment contingent upon completed work.

Safety Tips While at Home

A visitor at your door:

- Know who is at your door.
- Never open the door to a stranger – use a one-way peep hole.
- Establish the person’s identity and their purpose for the visit.
- If they refuse to identify themselves, contact police.
- If you live in an apartment, contact the onsite manager.
- If the visitor produces identification, consider checking with their business.
- If you are still uncomfortable, ask them to return later – this allows you to contact a friend or neighbor.
- Always be cautious and NEVER let someone in if you’re not sure who they are!