



For Immediate Release
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*******CONSUMER ALERT*****CONSUMER ALERT*******
MADIGAN WARNS CONSUMERS TO GUARD AGAINST HOME
REPAIR FRAUD FOLLOWING WEEKEND STORMS

Chicago – As Springfield and central Illinois homeowners and businesses assess the damage from a tornado Sunday evening and the severe storms and wind that struck in a second and third wave, Attorney General Lisa Madigan today warned all Illinoisans to protect themselves from home repair con artists who are always eager to profit from natural disasters.

There also were reports of tornadoes late Saturday night and early Sunday in several southern Illinois counties as well as flooding in Rockford and the Quad Cities and power outages in Henry and Fulton Counties. High winds also were reported in areas near Chicago.

“We hope that Illinoisans affected by these violent storms can begin to regroup and repair the damage without having to deal with scam artists trying to turn disasters into dollars by cheating distraught consumers,” Madigan said.

Madigan warned consumers and business owners to be careful before contracting to have damaged or destroyed property rebuilt and not to rush in to contractual agreements or make large down payments. Madigan also urged consumers to alert both her office and local law enforcement if suspicious “storm chasers” begin soliciting business in the area.

Madigan’s Consumer Protection Division offered the following tips to help protect individuals and companies from being duped by dishonest contractors:

- Be wary of door-to-door solicitors because many home repair con artists are transients who move quickly into a troubled area. Ask for recommendations from people you know and trust. Whenever possible, use established local contractors.
- Call Madigan’s Consumer Fraud Hotline to check out a business and to find out how many consumer complaints, if any, have been filed against a particular business.
- Ask to see any required state or local permits or licenses. Remember that insurance adjusters must be licensed by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, Division of Insurance, and roofers must be licensed by the Division of Professional Regulation.

- Shop around for the best deal. Get written estimates from several contractors and don't allow a salesperson to rush you into a deal.
- Get all terms of a contract in writing; obtain a copy of the signed contract and never make full payment until all work has been completed to your satisfaction.
- Be aware that you have the right to cancel within three business days if you sign a contract based on a salesman who comes to your home.
- Do not pay in cash.

Madigan reminded consumers that the Illinois Home Repair and Remodeling Act requires contractors to furnish customers with written contracts for any repair or remodeling work costing more than \$1,000. A contract must be signed by both the customer and the contractor.

The law also requires contractors to carry at least minimum amounts of insurance for property damage, bodily injury and improper home repair. Contractors also must provide consumers with an informational pamphlet entitled "Home Repair: Know Your Consumer Rights."

Additional information can be found online at www.IllinoisAttorneyGeneral.gov. To file a complaint with Madigan's office or to report any suspicious activity in your neighborhood, consumers can call the Attorney General's Consumer Fraud Hotline at one of the following numbers:

Chicago 1-800-386-5438 TTY 1-800-964-3013

Springfield 1-800-243-0618 TTY 1-877-844-5461

Carbondale 1-800-243-0607 TTY 1-877-675-9339

Spanish-language hotline: 1-866-310-8398

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