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ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN SUES CHICAGO HOME REPAIR CONTRACTOR

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today filed a lawsuit in Cook County Circuit Court against a Chicago home repair business that allegedly defrauded consumers out of more than \$245,000 in down payments in violation of several Illinois consumer protection laws.

Madigan sued A-1 Construction of Chicagoland, Inc., and A-1 President Joseph J. Schmitz and A-1 Secretary Vincent J. LaRocca for allegedly violating the Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act and the Home Repair and Remodeling Act by accepting thousands of dollars in down payments from Chicago-area consumers, but performing substandard or incomplete work or, in some cases, no work at all. The complaint also alleges that the defendants failed to respond to consumers' repeated requests for refunds. Madigan said that her Consumer Fraud Bureau has received at least 10 complaints from consumers, who paid the defendants amount ranging from \$4,000 to \$90,000.

"Complaints about home repair, remodeling and construction consistently rank among the top consumer complaints that my office receives each year," Madigan said. "Consumers need to make sure they are informed and ask the right questions before choosing a contractor so that they can avoid these kinds of home-repair schemes."

Madigan is seeking a permanent injunction preventing the defendants from engaging in the home repair trade, restitution to consumers, a civil penalty of \$50,000 per defendant, additional penalties of \$50,000 for each act committed with intent to defraud, an additional \$10,000 for each act committed against a senior citizen, and costs for the investigation and prosecution of the case.

Madigan reminded consumers that the best way to avoid home repair fraud is to request and then check references provided by contractors or deal only with companies and individuals who have done satisfactory work for friends or neighbors. Consumers can find home repair and remodeling tips and other information on Madigan's Web site by going to www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov and clicking on "Consumer." Consumers also can obtain more information on how to guard against home repair fraud by calling the Attorney General's Consumer Fraud Hotline at the following numbers:

Chicago 1-800-386-5438
Springfield 1-800-243-0618
Carbondale 1-800-243-0607

Assistant Attorney General Janice Parker is handling the case for Madigan's Consumer Fraud Bureau.

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