



December 30, 2010

\*\*\*\*\*CONSUMER ALERT\*\*\*\*\*CONSUMER ALERT\*\*\*\*\*

**ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN WARNS OF DOOR-TO-DOOR DRIVEWAY REPAIR SCAM*****Con Artists Offer Quick, Cheap Driveway Repair but Charge Consumers Thousands***

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today is warning Illinois homeowners to be aware of con artists who are going door-to-door and scamming consumers out of thousands of dollars by promising cheap, quick driveway repairs.

“Consumers should be very wary of any contractor going door-to-door to offer driveway repair work,” said Madigan. “Before agreeing to any work, ask questions about the contractor’s ability to do the job properly and report suspicious activity to my office’s Consumer Fraud Bureau and local police.”

As part of this scam, the con artists typically approach a homeowner claiming that they have asphalt left over from a previous job and can patch the homeowner’s driveway for a small cost. The scammer usually quotes a homeowner a low price or tells him or her not to worry about the price. Then, at the end of the job, the scam artist produces a costly bill. In other instances, the scam is pitched with a price quote that is difficult for the homeowner to calculate, such as \$18 a yard.

The reality is that after the scam artists complete the repair work, they give homeowners a bill totaling in the thousands of dollars and insist on payment. The scammers can become physically intimidating, pounding on the consumer’s door and demanding immediate payment, or offering to drive the consumers to their bank to withdraw money and pay the bill. In addition, these scam contractors often do shoddy work that needs to be repaired afterward by a reputable contractor.

Recent reports of this scam have come from central Illinois, particularly out of Sangamon and Logan counties, but these con artists have been known to operate throughout Illinois.

One consumer was forced to write an \$8,000 check for work the scam contractor originally said could be done free of charge. In another report to the Attorney General’s Office, a widow said she was forced to hand over \$2,500 after an alleged repair man said he would fix her driveway for a much lower price. The woman called a halt to the work once the con artist revealed the actual price tag.

The Sangamon County sheriff’s office made six arrests on Nov. 24 in connection with these scams. Subsequent media reports of those arrests caused a flood of complaints to authorities from consumers in Sangamon County and surrounding areas who had been approached in this scam as well.

Attorney General Madigan offered the following tips to avoid falling prey to this scam:

- Be skeptical of anyone who arrives at your door offering to repair your driveway on the spot or asks for a response immediately. Decline and ask them to leave. If they do not leave, contact your local police department. A reputable contractor will give you an estimate in writing along with references and will work with you to schedule the job at a mutually agreed upon time.
- Before contracting for home repair work, obtain at least two written estimates from local companies who provide a physical address – not a P.O. Box – and a phone number for their business. Request references and contact them to ask about the quality of the company’s work, and call the Attorney General’s Office to find out if anyone has lodged a complaint against the company.

Madigan urged any consumer who thinks they have been defrauded or is suspicious of someone soliciting this type of service to contact local law enforcement authorities and her office's Consumer Fraud Hotline:

Chicago 1-800-386-5438

Springfield 1-800-243-0618

Carbondale 1-800-243-0607

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