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ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN SUES CONTRACTOR IN DOWNSTATE DRIVEWAY REPAIR SCAM

Springfield — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today filed a lawsuit in Sangamon County Circuit Court against a home repair contractor who scammed consumers out of thousands of dollars under a guise of repairing their driveways for little to no fee.

Madigan's lawsuit alleges that since January 2010, Michael Maddox, of Hannibal, Mo., has gone door-to-door offering driveway repair work to consumers in Illinois for free or a small fee. But the lawsuit alleges that Maddox billed consumers for thousands of dollars after work was completed, in violation of the state's Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act and the Home Repair and Remodeling Act.

"Consumers should be skeptical of any contractor going door-to-door to offer repair work on the spot," Attorney General Madigan said. "Before contracting home repair work, consumers should thoroughly check out contractors' references and request written estimates."

The suit alleges Maddox refused to quote exact prices for services or did more work than what was agreed to in order to charge consumers thousands of dollars more. Homeowners who refused to pay were repeatedly harassed and intimidated by Maddox to force payment, according to Madigan's lawsuit. Consumers in Sangamon and Logan counties reported losses totaling \$36,000 to Madigan's office from this scheme.

Madigan's lawsuit asks the court to prohibit the defendant from working in the home repair trade in Illinois. The suit seeks to cancel Maddox's pending contracts and obtain restitution for affected consumers. The lawsuit also seeks to impose on the defendant a civil penalty of \$50,000, additional penalties of \$50,000 for each violation found to be committed with the intent to defraud, as well as \$10,000 per violation found to be committed against a person 65 years or older.

Attorney General Madigan offered the following tips to avoid falling prey to these types of home repair scams:

- 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

Assistant Attorney General Philip Heimlich is handling the case for Madigan's Consumer Fraud Bureau.

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