



July 3, 2013

MADIGAN SUES THREE METRO EAST HOME REPAIR CONTRACTORS FOR FRAUD

Springfield — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today filed lawsuits against three Metro East contractors who made off with more than \$89,000 in Illinois homeowners' money without completing the contracted repair work.

In St. Clair County, Madigan filed a lawsuit against Arnold Walters Construction Co. Inc., a contractor based in Belleville, for allegedly accepting down payments from senior citizens to repair hail damage but never commencing the work. In Madison County, Madigan filed a lawsuit against Ronald Briddell and Briddell Remodeling Inc. out of Collinsville, for allegedly accepting large down payments but failing to complete the work. In at least one instance, Briddell allegedly failed to pay subcontractors, and the subcontractor placed a lien on the consumer's home. Madigan also filed suit in Madison County against John Wesselman and his home repair business, Midwest Complete Remodeling Inc., after taking down payments for repair work but failing to initiate the projects.

"These con men convinced unsuspecting homeowners to pay significant sums upfront only to disappear once they pocketed the money after doing little to no work," Madigan said. "Cases like this demonstrate how critical it is to do your homework before hiring a contractor so you can be assured you're working with a legitimate business."

In addition, the lawsuits allege that the defendants offered to perform roofing work but were not licensed roofers as required by law, and they allege the defendants failed to comply with the Illinois Home Repair and Remodeling Act by failing to provide consumers with the required written contract or work order and the required consumer rights brochure and failing to maintain the required insurance.

Madigan's lawsuits ask the court to ban the defendants permanently from working in the home repair trade in Illinois, cancel all outstanding contracts with homeowners and award restitution to consumers. The suits also seek civil penalties of \$50,000 with a possible additional award of \$10,000 per senior victim.

Madigan offered some tips to help families and businesses from being ripped off by dishonest contractors:

- When arranging for home repairs, talk to neighbors, friends and family for recommendations of contractors they have used successfully in the past.
- Roofers must be licensed by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, and insurance adjusters must be licensed by the Illinois Department of Insurance. Ask to see required state or local permits or licenses.
- Get written estimates from multiple contractors, and don't be rushed into a deal.
- Call the Attorney General's Consumer Fraud Hotline (800-243-0618) to ask whether other consumers have filed complaints about a company you are thinking of hiring.
- Don't make a full payment until all the work has been completed to your satisfaction, and do not pay in cash.

Madigan also reminded consumers that the Home Repair and Remodeling Act requires contractors to furnish customers with written contracts for any repair or remodeling work that costs more than \$1,000. Both the contractor and the customer must sign the contract. 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 brochure entitled "Home Repair: Know Your Consumer Rights."

Madigan encouraged consumers to contact her Consumer Fraud Hotline (800-243-0618) to report home repair schemes or to learn tips for finding a reputable contractor.

Assistant Attorney General Deborah Sterling-Scott is handling the cases for Madigan's Consumer Fraud Bureau.

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