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Scam Alert – Springtime Cons

by Stacie Harris, Economic Crimes Unit

It's that time of the year again when the weather is nice and when most people start making improvements and repairs on their homes.

This is also the time when the travelling con artists start operating throughout the United States offering to do your repairs (*Roof Coating/Repair, Asphalt Paving/Driveway Sealing, House/Barn Painting, Tree Pruning/Landscaping, and Termite/Pest Control*) at a significantly reduced rate than what a legitimate business would charge. These people will ask for a deposit, or even the full amount, up front and state that they will go get the supplies and return. Some take the money and never return. Those that do return, usually provide extremely poor labor with subpar supplies. For example, paint is watered down, paving material is applied very thin and will crumble and crack within a short time, insect spray is made up of nothing more than water and/or water and milk, roofing repair consists of spraying silver or black spray paint on the roof.

Some of these people have also been known to con their way into your homes, on the pretense of using your phone, checking for leaks from the roof, etc. While inside your home, they scout out valuables and/or easy items to pocket. Some work in pairs that while one of them has your attention, the other is working their way through your home taking what isn't theirs. Many will use intimidation. Always remember, there is no reason to let a stranger into your home.

These traveling con artists tend to prey upon the elderly homeowners, although not solely upon them, with these type of door-to-door scams. Always remember:

- Don't do business with door-to-door contractors.
- Keep all doors, including the garage door, closed and locked at all times, especially when you are outside working in the yard.
- Install security doors with metal grillwork and key locks instead of latched screen doors.
- Don't hide keys under the doormat or rocks.
- Secure sliding glass doors with anti-slide block or slide bolt.

It may cost you more to hire someone from a reputable business that has been checked out with the Better Business Bureau, but you at least have a better sense of who you're dealing with, and possible recourse if the job is not done correctly. Just because their ad in the phone book may say they are a BBB Member, doesn't always mean they are. Make sure you actually call and verify the business with the Better Business Bureau at (866)206-1800 (toll-free).

IDENTIFY A SCAM
~ BEFORE A SCAM IDENTIFIES YOU! ~