



NEWS FROM SCDCA

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
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1.800.922.1594 (toll free in SC)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Scam Alert: Locksmith Swindlers

Columbia, SC... The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs (SCDCA) is warning the public about an increasingly prevalent scam that preys on consumers locked out of their car or home. Upon calling a “local” locksmith, the consumer receives a price quote. Once the locksmith arrives to perform the work, the price goes up substantially. Although feeling slighted, the urgency of this situation often results in the consumer giving in.

A common thread of this fraud is the use of a “local” number in the phonebook that actually redirects callers out-of-state. Another red flag is a company that has no address or uses a fake address. Matching an address to a phone number can filter out many of the scammers and can usually be done through a simple internet search. Follow the additional tips below to avoid becoming a victim of this scam:

- ***Plan ahead-*** Research reputable locksmiths before the need arises and save their contact information. Contact SCDCA to see if we have any complaints on file. Also, do a quick internet search on the company. Other consumers may have complained about the company through online message boards.
- ***Do they belong to any Associations?-*** Trade associations often have “Best Practices” their members must adhere to. Check with the Associated Locksmiths of America by visiting www.findalocksmith.com.
- ***Ask for the registered name of the business-*** If the company answers the phone with a vague name like “locksmith services,” beware. Ask for the registered name of the business and if they aren’t willing to give it, hang up.
- ***Be suspicious of low estimates-*** Ask for an estimate when calling and ask for it in writing **before** any work begins. Contact two to three companies to compare pricing. If a very low price is quoted- \$10 or \$20- this is indicative of a scam.

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- ***Ask for identification and a business card-*** Also, be wary of unmarked cars. Typically, a locksmith will have company insignia on their vehicles. Don't be afraid to send them away if they seem suspicious.
- ***Pay with a credit card-*** Credit cards offer more consumer fraud protections. A locksmith asking for cash only is also a sign of a scam.

For more information on scams, or to report a scam, consumers can visit SCDC's website at www.consumer.sc.gov or call 800-922-1594.

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SCDC's aims to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, complaint mediation, enforcement and education. To file a complaint or get information on consumer issues, visit www.consumer.sc.gov or call toll-free, 1.800.922.1594.

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