

NEWS FROM SCDCA

South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs



Brandolyn Thomas Pinkston, Administrator

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS ISSUES WARNING ON TORNADO DAMAGE AND HOME REPAIRS

Columbia, SC.....When tornadoes, high winds and other natural disasters bring destruction, con artists sometimes follow close behind. The recent tornadoes in so many areas of the state have overwhelmed homeowners and other South Carolina consumers who are emotionally vulnerable and ideal victims for someone who's less than honest. Swindlers may arrive at your door, ready to take your money, but take your time and know what you're doing. The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs has tips for avoiding fraud and price-gouging following events of nature.

If your home has been damaged, take reasonable precautions to guard against further damage. For example, if your roof is damaged, cover it with a tarp to keep the rain out and prevent more damage to insulation, drywall or other household items.

Keep records and receipts of your expenses: your insurance company may reimburse you. If you are a renter, check with your landlord for insurance questions.

Be careful who you deal with. Remember that "disaster vultures" may descend after a disaster. "Homeowners should be aware of fraudulent repair people who come to their door offering to make home repairs and home improvements," said SCDCA Administrator Brandolyn Thomas Pinkston. "These phony repair people make a direct approach, quickly noting some supposedly fundamental flaw in the house that they say must be repaired immediately. They specialize in roofing and siding,

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About the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs:

Established by the Consumer Protection code in 1974, The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs represents the interests of South Carolina Consumers.

Our mission is to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, mediation, enforcement and education.

For more information, visit www.sccoconsumer.gov.

painting and insulation, furnace repair, landscaping, wet basements and driveway paving and re-paving.” She added that some con artists sweeten the deal by telling people that they have materials left over from another job that they just finished and are available at a ridiculously low price.”

The Department of Consumer Affairs recommends that consumers:

- Make sure that contractors they’re considering hiring are licensed and bonded.
- Get more than one bid.
- Ask for referrals from family and friends, their Realtor and insurance company.
- Make sure the contract is in writing and states exactly what work is to be performed, when it will be completed, and the full cost of the repairs.
- Don’t agree to anything until you have approval from your insurance adjuster.

For more information, contact the Public Information Division at 803.734.4190, toll free in SC at 1.800.922.1594, or online at www.sccoconsumer.gov.

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