

Unscrupulous Contractors

Beware of Home Solicitation Sales whether by phone or door to door sales.

These contractors often prey on the elderly. In fact, there seems to be a network of contractors in different aspects of work, such as, air conditioning, roofing, painting, water conditioning sales, etc. that specifically depend on phone and door to door sales to conduct their business. (While not all contractors who do phone sales are unscrupulous, when dealing with telephone or door to door solicitations, people should exercise great caution.)

These contractors will often have a local phone number that is forwarded to an answering service. A phone call to City of Punta Gorda Building staff at 941-575-3362 or 941-575-3324, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. will verify whether or not you are dealing with a locally licensed contractor.

Once a sale is made to a homeowner, it is believed that the contractors then pass information onto other unscrupulous contractors who then attempt to have you purchase their services. These contractors will then return to you residence year after year in attempts to have you purchase additional services. Often, they will advise you that they will only charge you for labor and that the materials will be covered under your warranty. The cost of the labor is often as much as the original job.

These contractors will often spend a lot of time with the customer in attempts to gather personal information that can then be passed onto others. They often employ high-pressure salespeople that will not leave until a contract is signed. The high-pressure sales tactics often include utilizing multiple sales personnel. If you ever feel pressured, advise the salesperson to leave. If the salesperson fails to leave or you feel threatened, contact the Punta Gorda Police Department at 941-639-4111.

Remember that you have seventy-two (72) hours to cancel a home solicitation contract. You must send the contractor a letter stating that you wish to cancel the sale. This letter must be sent via certified mail, return receipt requested. Be sure to keep a copy of this letter for your records. In some cases such as house or roof painting, the contractors will have you sign the contract and they will start work the next day. If this is the case, you are still able to use the seventy-two (72) hour cancellation clause. It is recommended that you immediately contact the contractor by phone and advise them that you are cancelling the sale that that you are sending certified mail advising the same. The contractor is required to refund any deposit.

If you have any questions or concerns, contact the City of Punta Gorda Building Staff.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS:

Building:	941-575-3324
Licensing:	941-575-3362
Police Dept.	941-639-4111
Emergency:	911

To avoid most sales solicitation calls, consumers can register with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS). All solicitors operating in Florida, EXCEPT charitable agencies, newspapers, real estate professionals in response to a yard sign or ad, or calls regarding an existing debt or contract, are prohibited from placing calls to numbers on this list. There is an initial \$10.00 fee and a \$5.00 annual renewal fee.

To register, call 1-800-435-7352 or write to FDACS, Division of Consumer Services, Mayo Building, Tallahassee, Florida, 32399-0800. FDACS is responsible for enforcement of this law, not your local telephone company.

..paraphrased from page 15 of the Information Pages of the November 1999 Sprint Telephone Directory.