

## Fair and trade show exhibitors— Not always what they seem

Most consumers assume when they attend trade shows, fairs, or home improvement seminars that all the businesses are reputable. This can be a very expensive assumption.

While many exhibitors are successful and reputable, there may be some who have little experience and skill or are looking for potential victims.

Sometimes drawings for a free prize are held and everyone turns out to be a winner. Later, winners learn they have to pay money to get that “free vacation” or will be forced to listen to a high pressure sales pitch in their homes to get a free rug shampoo.

Shows, fairs and seminars serve a valuable function for consumers by displaying a great deal of merchandise and information. However, consumers would be wise to take their time and not sign any contracts immediately. Before entering into any agreement for home

improvements, it is critical for consumers to review the complaint history of a contractor. Check with the Bureau of Consumer Protection (800-422-7128) as well as local trade associations. Also, ask family, friends, and co-workers whom they would recommend or avoid.

Consider at least three different businesses and also get three references from each business. Try to get one or two references from several years ago, to get a better idea of quality of materials and follow up service provided. If references will allow it, go see the contractor’s work in person.

Reputable contractors enhance the beauty and value of a home. Unscrupulous contractors cost you money or cause extensive damage to your home.

A contractor is not necessarily good or reputable simply because they advertise in the yellow pages, newspapers, radio or TV.

Don’t assume someone offering a “free” inspection is a safe bet or feel pressured because you accepted the free estimate. Shop and compare before making a commitment.

The Bureau of Consumer Protection provides information and tips for dealing with home improvement contractors.

For more information, or to file a complaint, contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection at:

**(800) 422-7128**

**FAX: (608) 224-4939**

**TTY: (608) 224-5058**

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