

Tips for Smart Consumers

DON'T BE A VICTIM OF TELEMARKETING FRAUD

A Message from Attorney General Bill Sorrell

THE PROBLEM

- Vermonters lose millions of dollars each year as a result of telemarketing fraud.
- The majority of the victims of telemarketing scams are senior citizens; some seniors have lost their life savings to fraudulent telemarketers.
- You have legal rights that can help protect you against telemarketing fraud.

HOW PEOPLE ARE DEFRAUDED

Fraudulent telemarketers use a variety of approaches to fleece their victims. Here are some typical "pitches":

Prize scams: *"You are eligible to win a major prize!" "You have won the lottery!"*

The truth: Your prize will be the cheap jewelry or the \$1.00 vacation certificate, not the car or cash- in exchange for paying hundreds of dollars for a water filter, vitamins, or other products. Or you'll pay "taxes" or other charges and never see any lottery winnings.

Credit repair/loans: *"We can repair your credit and get you a loan!"*

The truth: Many companies promise, for an advanced fee, to repair credit or lend money, and then fail to achieve the promised results.

Recovery rooms: *"We can recover the money you lost from the last telemarketer!"*

The truth: The "recovery room may scam you a second time.

IT IS AGAINST THE LAW FOR A TELEMARKETER TO:

- Require you to pay any money or buy anything to enter a sweepstakes or contest.
- Ask for an advanced payment to repair your credit, get a loan, or recover money lost to another telemarketer.
- Take money from your bank account without your written consent.
- Use a courier service to pick up payment from you, unless the goods you are buying are delivered at the same time.

THREE TIPS TO AVOID BECOMING A VICTIM:

- Never buy at the time of the sales pitch. Legitimate businesses will never pressure you to make a quick decision.
- Never give your credit card or bank account information over the phone unless you made the call and know the business is legitimate.
- If it seems too good to be true, it probably is!

IF YOU HAVE BEEN SCAMMED, YOU STILL HAVE RIGHTS, INCLUDING:

The right to cancel your purchase made over the phone within three business days of the call.

The seller must give you written and verbal notice of this right, and your three days do not begin to run until these disclosures are made.

The right to receive a "chargeback" or credit on your credit card if you were not properly notified of your right to cancel.

This right continues for three years from date of sale.

For more information on your rights, or to file a complaint against a fraudulent telemarketer, contact the Attorney's General's

Consumer Assistance Program
Morrill Hall-UVM
Burlington, VT 05405
Phone: 80- 649-2424 (toll-free) or
802-656-1025 (Chittenden County)
Email: ConsumerComplaint@atg.state.vt.us