

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S

SCAM ALERT

A Consumer Protection Alert from Oregon Attorney General John Kroger

BUYER BEWARE: DOOR-TO-DOOR MAGAZINE SALES

Attorney General John Kroger warns Oregonians to be on the lookout for unscrupulous door-to-door magazine peddlers.

Door-to-door magazine companies are a perennial source of frustration for Oregon consumers, generating more than 150 complaints in the past year alone. Employees of travelling sales crews - mostly young adults - sell magazines and other products door-to-door using a variety of misleading sales pitches in order to obtain orders.

Most recently the Oregon Department of Justice has seen influx of complaints about Atlantic Circulation, Inc., a magazine distribution company. The sales crews employed by Atlantic Circulation have allegedly tried to boost sales by suggesting the magazine subscriptions will benefit a charity. In fact, many consumers who purchased subscriptions from the company never received their orders and there was no charitable donation.

Travelling sales crews don't just raise consumer protection concerns, the crewmembers themselves are sometimes victims of scam and physical abuse. While these smooth-talking hucksters may pepper you with stories about raising funds for college, athletics, troops abroad, church or a local charity, many are employed by for-profit operations that take advantage of vulnerable youth and homeless teens.

Don't be fooled. There are legitimate organizations that conduct fundraising or sell products door-to-door. Nevertheless, Oregonians should proceed with caution when contemplating transactions at the door.

Here are some things you can do to avoid being bamboozled:

- If you're not expecting someone, don't answer the door.
- If you answer the door, don't open it wide and NEVER invite them in.
- Don't feel pressured to buy on the spot; before you buy anything, check whether the business is registered to solicit door-to-door with the city you live in.

- Ask for materials in writing before purchasing the product.
- If you feel threatened, call the police.
- If you gave a check and want to cancel your order, cancel the check first, then call to cancel the subscription.
- If you gave a credit card number and are concerned it will now be misused, call your credit card company and cancel the card. You may also need to monitor the charges that appear on your account for a while.

Oregon has a "cooling off rule" allowing consumers three days to cancel purchases over \$25 that are made at your home. Under the Cooling-Off Rule, the salesperson must:

- Tell you about your cancellation rights at the time of sale.
- Give you two copies of a cancellation form (one to keep and one to send).
- Give you a copy of your contract or receipt.

Anyone who believes they have been approached by a scammer should call the Oregon Department of Justice Consumer Hotline at 1-877-877-9392 or go to the Department's Web site: www.oregonattorneygeneral.gov. Attorney General John Kroger recently unveiled a new feature on called Be InfORmed, which allows consumers to look up complaints about businesses on-line: www.oregonattorneygeneral.gov/beinformed.

Attorney General Kroger leads the Oregon Department of Justice. The Department's mission is to fight crime and fraud, protect the environment, improve child welfare, promote a positive business climate and defend the rights of all Oregonians.