

COUNTY OF OAKLAND
OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

MICHAEL J. BOUCHARD



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sheriff Bouchard Issues "Home Improvement Scam" Alert

April 12, 2010 (Oakland County) - Sheriff Michael Bouchard would like to remind all residents that every spring and summer, crews of day laborers travel from city to city in search of victims. While driving through neighborhoods and mobile home parks, they offer to pave your driveway, repair your roof, or paint your house with supplies left over from other jobs. The repair work is completed very quickly, however the quality is poor. The repairs often cost more than the original estimates. You may find yourself swindled and defrauded by transient/traveling criminals performing "gypsy" scams. Do not become a victim! Here are the common types of home improvement frauds:

- One of the most common types of fraud involves asphalt paving. The perpetrator often tells the homeowner they have left over asphalt from another job in their neighborhood and they offer to resurface the driveway or sidewalk at a reduced price. When the homeowner agrees, the perpetrator applies a thin layer of asphalt that often breaks away in a few days, or uses a substance other than asphalt. The perpetrators quickly collect your money and leave the area before the homeowner is aware of the poor work.
- Another common fraud involves painting the exterior of homes. The perpetrator paints the exterior of your home using a substandard water-based paint. When the homeowner inspects the job, it may look sufficient. The homeowner then pays the perpetrator and they leave the area quickly. A few days later, or after rain, the homeowner can then notice the low-quality job and the perpetrator has moved on to another city.
- Other frauds can involve the perpetrator partially completing a job, requesting payment and then never returning to finish the work. Or the perpetrator will give an estimate for work and starts the job without the homeowner's permission. The perpetrator performs part of the work, and demands payment for the entire job.

WARNING SIGNS

- The repairperson drives an unmarked truck or van with an out-of-state license.
- The worker has no business identification, local address or telephone number.
- You are offered a "special price" if you sign today.
- The worker wants upfront cost or fees, or accepts only cash.
- No written estimates or contracts are provided.
- The worker does not have any references.
- The offer sounds "too good to be true"
- The worker cannot provide any contractor's license, permits, insurance, or bonding information.

If you are approached by these types of persons in your neighborhood, please call the Oakland County Sheriff's Office or your local police department to help prevent you or your neighbors from becoming a victim of a "Gypsy" scam.

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