



Nabbing the Bad Guys in Colorado

The State's Fraud Awareness Campaign Targets Air Duct Cleaning Scams

Air duct cleaning scammers get busted every day. However, Colorado is on a roll after two recent high-profile cases, where the Colorado Attorney General's Office successfully sued and barred two air duct cleaning companies from doing business in the state.

In the first case, tried at the end of 2014, operators of Seabreeze, an air duct cleaning company, were alleged to have used popular discount websites Groupon and LivingSocial, along with direct mail, to lure homeowners with deals to clean their home's ducts for less than \$35. However, according to the suit and the 220 complaints filed against the company, once the operators were on-site, prices would be jacked up hundreds of dollars. Those who did pay the increased rate were left with damaged ducts or debris littering their home.

The second case, against 212 Home Inc. (dba Denver Air Duct), was labeled a bait-and-switch operation in which homeowners would contract with the company for a \$39 duct cleaning offer, only to later be charged much more after the contractors fraudulently identified expensive and hazardous issues within the home.

With the work of NADCA's Anti-Fraud Task Force, NADCA is actively working to derail blow-and-go contractors luring unsuspecting homeowners using ultra-low rates. A central tenet of this effort is consumer education, helping homeowners and attorneys general better understand the air duct cleaning industry. "By focusing on education, we're able to show that these scammers don't define our industry," says Mark Zarzeczny, Chair of the Anti-Fraud Task Force. "There are legitimate businesses operating out there, providing a valuable service, adhering to a professional standard, and we want to make sure people are aware of that."

The Anti-Fraud Task Force's effort to connect with states' attorneys general to introduce them to NADCA and educate them about the air duct cleaning industry has been effective. Colorado's active fraud prevention program, Stop Fraud Colorado, already focuses on air duct cleaning scams and has a website dedicated to raising awareness of various fraudulent activities in the state. "It would be great if every state were focused on these issues," says Jodi Araujo, Executive Director of NADCA. "It's good for the consumer, and good for the legitimate businesses that are our members." ●

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