

Security Spotlight

An informational Guide for Securitas Canada Clients and Employees



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Scam Alert: Deceptive Door Knockers!



Even in the age of internet shopping, one common and unfortunately effective event that still occurs to many unsuspecting homeowners is the doorstep scam. There are many various forms of this con, but if you, as a homeowner, are aware of them you can protect yourself and your property. Realize that a substantial number of laws exist that protect you financially from pressured sales tactics. By being alert and knowledgeable of the most prevalent scams you can minimize your chances of becoming a target or victim.

Survey and Census Workers

Statistics Canada Surveys are conducted in person, by telephone or electronically. Here the intent of the conman is to steal personal information or observe security system placement, if any, in your home. A person will come to your door claiming to be hired by Stats Canada, and begin to ask detailed questions about your finances and social security number.

Depending on the survey, Stats Canada will send an introductory letter to inform you that an interviewer will communicate with you. If you have not received such a letter, there are ways to verify the survey. First of all, the swindler will probably be neatly dressed and presentable, often only standing in your doorway, but they may try to hand you a paper form to complete. While you are doing this, they will nonchalantly be look-

ing many security features within plain site.

The best response is to first ask for an identification badge, which is issued to all real Statistics Canada workers, and for an 800-number to call where you can provide the information. This way the impersonating worker will not have a reason to remain in your home and a real worker will gladly accept your decision and leave.

Charity Collections and Magazine Subscriptions

In this type of scam a person will come to the door asking for either charitable donations or for a magazine subscription. A common practice is for adults to bring along children to make this work more effectively. It has been stated that a recent charitable scam has been people posing as "workers" for veteran organizations. The best defense is to use your gut instinct, because in many instances there is no way to really verify the house caller. Watch for anyone who wants you to pay now and deliver later. It is recommended that if you are going to purchase a magazine order to do it online after verifying that the company is legitimate.

If you are going to make a purchase that day then pay by check, watch out to whom the check is made out. Scammers might say they are from "College Associate Sales" and ask for the checks to be made out to "CAS". In this scam they can easily add an "H" later for the check to be made to cash.

Utility Company Scams

Another cheat is where someone knocks on your door claiming to be from a utility company. Here the person is trying to gain entrance to your home to see if you have any items worth stealing or to fix a "faulty" item and then demand payment. They instill an immediate fear that a risk exists, and need to correct the problem.

The major method in countering this is to ask for their identification and then for you to find the phone number of the utility company and call. Never accept a phone number they offer and be careful of incoming calls. Typically, major utility companies require their employees and vehicles to be clearly marked and only enter the home if they must. Even most delivery companies forbid their drivers from entering a customer's home.

Jury Duty Scams

Here a person knocks at the door claiming to be from either the local or federal courts. They pitch the con by stating you missed a jury duty summons and that unless you pay right there the police will come to your home and arrest you. They might have an official looking form backing up their scam. Realize that the courts will send either a process server (a summons to appear) or a letter by certified mail if you had missed an actual jury duty summons. At no time will the court system come to your home to require payment.

Pressured and Unethical Sales Tactics

One common door knocker is someone selling a genuine product, but is an unethical employee up-selling an item for cash. They might have all the required identifications and even check out if you call the company. Here the scam is to utilize a pressure selling tactic that the offer is only good for right now.

They might say, "Hey, if you pay me fifty bucks I will install a cable box in another room today". The product or service is probably overpriced and substandard in maintenance or installation. Canadians are protected by Consumer Laws, whereby each province has a "cooling off period," meaning you have a specified number of days to cancel contracts made without penalty.

In order to protect yourself never pay cash, because then you cannot prove that you paid for the product or service. Also, never be upsold by a legitimate employee because their so called product or service may not be covered by the company.



Conclusions

In order to protect oneself from neighbourhood door-knockers of questionable ethics follow these items. First, if you are alone or unsure, do not let the person into your home. Next, stand firm in the face of high pressure sales tactics; do not let them force you to make a quick decision. If it is a true sale they will return.

Use your peep hole and door chains to speak to an unknown person with the door cracked slightly open. Furthermore, get three or more estimates for any item being sold, this ensures that you are not being overcharged for a product or service. Conduct an internet search of the company to see if they actually do exist and any possible reviews from other consumers.

Remember to get any contract terms and payments in writing. Ask for and inspect the identification of all individuals and call the company first before you allow entry. Look up the phone number yourself, do not use the one provided. Finally, remember to be cautious and proactive in not allowing others to scare you into making a quick or hasty decision.