

## STORM CHASERS – NOT THE TERRY SWAILS KIND

Two weeks ago, I warned of the potential for unscrupulous sales people going door to door offering to treat your ash trees, or offering to cut and remove trees. I wrote about that in response to what is a slow-motion natural disaster, the emerald ash borer. The appearance of these kinds of transient scam artists is often noted after the finding of the disease in a particular locality.

Now I need to warn you of another type of scammer who follows the disaster news. These are “storm chasers”, opportunists who show up after severe weather. On April 9<sup>th</sup>, we experienced at least one tornado here, causing lots of damage, plus high winds which piled on the damage. So it was predictable to expect storm chasers to follow. And they did.

A Camanche woman found herself visited by a man who said he worked for American Dream Home Improvement. He wanted to sell her a new roof, and he seemed very persistent about it. She felt intimidated and listened to him for over an hour. She did not know how to get rid of him. Finally the young man went outside to take some measurements. The woman immediately called the Camanche Police Dept, who came right out and confronted the man. They identified him and told him to leave. He lacked the Camanche city permit for door to door solicitors.

The problem with such storm chasers is they are such “fly-by-night” outfits. You don’t know who they are, what their experience is, or the quality of their work. And when they are finished with the job and gone, how do you complain if something does not live up to what was promised? You are much better off to go with local contractors, who are established in the area, and whose references you can check. With storm damage, you can talk to your insurance agent about the best way to get a contractor on board to make repairs.

## SELLING STEAKS FROM A TRUCK

Ed Johnson of Garden Plain, Illinois reported another example of door to door sales. Two men in a blue Chevrolet truck, with a chest freezer mounted in back, showed up in his yard and offered to sell him Omaha Steaks. Omaha Steaks is a well-established retailer selling steak, other meats, and side dishes online and in store locations (none in this area). I hear it is

pretty good stuff. But they do not sell door to door. I confirmed that by phone with the company. So whatever these two men sold, they did not sell Omaha Steaks.

This is a pretty good example of the kind of thing we start to see every spring. Door to door sales people offering cleaning products, meat, black-topping, seal-coating, roof-painting, farm gates, you name it. You're always taking a risk dealing with this kind of sales. Just as with the storm chasers, once the sale is made and these solicitors move on, it's pretty hard to track them down and ask for your money back after the seal coating washes off.

Because of the many years of problems with what the law calls "transient merchants", they are required to get permits to operate. This applies in every city and town in Clinton County and Maquoketa too. Transient merchants in the rural areas of Clinton County need a county permit. I've written this many times before, but I will repeat...If a sales person does not show a permit, shut the door and end the conversation.

### PLUS 50 LIVING FAIR – APRIL 28

Seniors vs. Crime will be working at the Plus 50 Living Fair at the Vista Grand in Clinton on April 28<sup>th</sup>, from 9 am to 1:30 pm. This year we are teaming up with Senior Medicare Patrol to sponsor a community shred event. Bring your old files, records, insurance EOB's, anything paper, and it will get shredded. But come earlier rather than later for the shredding. When the truck is full, it leaves!

After you drop off your shred material, come inside and see us at our table, register for door prizes, and browse our pamphlets, bookmarks, and brochures. We want to educate everyone to recognize scams! And we are handing out a couple of things you might find useful around the house.

Let me know about scams, fraud, or other crookedness you run across. Most of what I learn, I learn from you. Contact me at Seniors vs. Crime, Clinton County Sheriff's Office, 563-242-9211 extension 4433, or email me at [randymeier@gapa911.us](mailto:randymeier@gapa911.us).

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