

DOOR TO DOOR PEDDLERS AND CABLE TV

In my last column, I reported on complaints I received on phony cable TV calls. A number of people contacted me, telling me someone claiming to work for DISH wanted to sell them an “upgrade” engineered to prevent or minimize service interruptions due to storms or heavy rainfall. The caller quoted \$160 as the cost of the upgrade, and wanted payment sent by check to a post office box in Brooklyn, New York.

As everyone soon discovered, this was a complete hoax. DISH did not endorse or authorize this promotion.

A Dewitt woman alerted me last week, this scam continues, with just a little variation. The Dewitt caller reported receiving a visit from a door to door salesman just before sunset. The salesman delivered the same pitch in person, offering an upgrade to prevent storm outages. The salesman was described as a younger man wearing a shirt displaying a Direct TV logo, but displaying no further identification. He wanted to schedule a follow-up visit, but the Dewitt woman felt uncomfortable with the whole thing, and declined the offer.

This situation gives me an opening to write about door to door peddlers again. Those folk become much more active in the spring and summer months. In past years, they’ve offered cable TV packages, frozen meat, driveway sealing, and cleaning products, just to name a few. We need to be extremely wary of people showing up at the doorstep wanting to sell something. This practice is so full of fraud, Clinton County and the incorporated cities of Clinton, Dewitt, and Camanche, require door to door peddlers to get licenses before conducting business.

The licensing is our first line of defense against cheating door to door peddlers. If you get a visit from such a peddler, ask immediately to see their city or county license. No license – slam the door shut. Don’t listen to any excuses, like “our application is pending.” If the peddler lacks a license, they flunked the first honesty test, and you don’t need to hear any more.

To date, the Clinton County Sheriff’s Office issued exactly zero licenses for peddlers. I contacted the Dewitt city clerk on the Direct TV salesman. The clerk told me, Dewitt issued no licenses to Direct TV sales people.

Several state laws in Iowa govern the practices of door to door sales. I consider the most important of these state laws to be the requirement that door to door vendors give each customer a three day right of cancellation, *and furnish the customer with a written document detailing that right of cancellation.*

If you get a visit from a door to door peddler, your best course of action is to turn them away. But if you don't see a permit, also contact your law enforcement agency, and ask them to check out the sales people. Door to door peddlers, most of who are transient and work across the country, don't want to spend time in an area where law enforcement is checking on them all the time.

OTHER SCAMS

I received two calls this week from folks who told me someone called them, claiming to work for a Texas sheriff's office, warning them a warrant issued for their arrest on drug trafficking charges. The caller also claimed the Social Security numbers of those receiving the calls, were "blacklisted" whatever that means. The message encouraged the recipient to call for further information.

I called the number provided, and heard a message, delivered in imperfect and accented English, telling me I reached the Social Security Administration. I doubt it. If you get such a call, don't respond in any way. Ignore the call.

Many people in the last month reported calls telling them of computer problems, and wanting remote access to their computer to make fixes. They sound quite persuasive to their victims. Don't fall for this. Anyone calling and asking anything about your computer is a scammer – period.

CONTACT SENIORS VS. CRIME

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.

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