



SAFETY & SECURITY TIP

FROM THE OFFICE OF LEE COUNTY SHERIFF MIKE SCOTT

Bad Weather Encourages Home Improvement Scams

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The heavy rain and flooding that recently pounded Southwest Florida have left many homeowners with leaky roofs, water intrusion, loose tree limbs, and crumbling infrastructure. If you are one of those affected by Mother Nature, listen up!

The Lee County Sheriff's Office realizes you want to have your problems repaired as quickly as possible so you can regain a sense of normalcy; however, the mindset to rush into repairs without first doing your homework can leave you vulnerable to fly-by-night con-artists looking to make a quick buck by way of home improvement scams. Fortunately, you can avoid being left with an empty wallet and unfinished repair work by following these tips that will help you steer clear of a shameless scammer:

- **Avoid door-to-door solicitations at all costs.** Hiring someone who randomly provides an unsolicited offer is a disaster waiting to happen. Many of these scammers have little to no experience in home repair, use high-pressure sales tactics, quote too good to be true prices and ask for payment upfront.
- **Find a reputable contractor** using referrals from friends, neighbors, and co-workers. 1) Check for complaints with the Better Business Bureau, 2) Contact the DBPR (Division of Business and Professional Regulation) to verify professional licensing, 3) Confirm they have a business tax receipt with your county or city tax department, 4) Check the Division of Workers' Compensation for proof of coverage, and 5) Ask for proof of general liability insurance.
- **Insist on a written contract** detailing the work to be done, terms of service, etc.
- **Never pay in full before the work is finished**, especially when paying with cash.

For more information on this subject, call the sheriff's office Community Relations Unit at 258-3280, or contact the DBPR online at www.myfloridalicense.com. To report suspected unlicensed activity, call the Unlicensed Activity Hotline at 866-532-1440.