



**STRONG STORMS CAN POSE RISKS TO YOUR POCKETBOOK
Beware of “Storm Chasers” Offering Repair Deals**

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MADISON –The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection reminds storm and flooding victims to be careful who they hire to do any needed repairs.

“In an emergency situation, consumers needing home repairs are more vulnerable to scams,” said Janet Jenkins, Administrator of the Division of Trade and Consumer Protection. “We call such scam-artists Storm Chasers.”

Sometimes these contractors arrive on scene shortly after the storm, collect money up front for promised repairs, and then disappear without doing any work; or the contractor starts the work and then asks for more money than the agreed upon price to finish the project.

Home repair contractors are not licensed by the State of Wisconsin, as required in other trades such as plumbing; however, a recently enacted law does impose a registration requirement for contractors through the Wisconsin Department of Commerce. That registration does not guarantee a contractor has any actual knowledge or experience in home repair. Storm Chasers are typically from out-of-state, have little or no background in home repair, and charge ridiculous prices for shoddy work.

Consumer Protection offers these timely tips:

- Be wary of any contractor who knocks at your door. Call the police or sheriff’s department to check them out.
- Try to get a local contractor. Ask contractors if they are subcontracting your job. Be careful if local contractors are using outside subcontractors.
- Get lien waivers from anyone you pay for home repairs. It is necessary to do this because if the person collecting the money doesn’t pay the supplier or worker, a lien could be put on your property.
- Get a written contract, with a start and completion date, and warranty information. Also make certain the contract states exactly what work is to be done and what materials are to be used. Never rely on verbal commitment.
- Contractors that register with the state are issued a card. Make sure any contractor you are considering hiring shows you their state registration card.
- Have someone watch the work being done. Ask your local building inspectors to visit your job site often.
- Request a copy of the contractor’s certificate of liability insurance.

“We don’t want Wisconsin consumers being taken advantage of during such difficult times,” added Jenkins. “If it sounds too good to be true – it probably is.”

Contact the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection if you have questions about contractors – we can tell you if we have received complaints. Find us on the web at www.datcp.state.wi.us; via e-mail at DATCPHotline@wi.gov; or call the toll-free hotline at 1-800-422-7128.

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