

Avoiding Contractor Scams

By Ryan Thompson, Pine Knoll Shores Police Chief

Although Hurricane Florence impacted our area 15 months ago, our Police Department is still investigating claims from residents who have been scammed by contractors. This happens far more than we know about and often goes unreported because the victim feels that nothing can be done or they are embarrassed that it happened. The most common way these types of incidents are found out is after the victim writes a check to the contractor and assumes the work is completed. The victim returns home and finds that the work was never finished. They try to call their contractor only to find out that the phone number has been changed. This is the "cookie cutter" mold of what a contractor scam looks like.

There are ways that you can protect yourself and prevent this from happening. Before hiring a contractor, ask for a list of references from previous jobs they have completed. Call some of the references and find out what their experience was with that contractor. If a contractor is not able to provide a list of references or refuses to do so, I would seriously consider not hiring him or her. It will take some of our victims years to financially recover from being scammed. It is absolutely worth the time to make a few phone calls.

Ask the contractor if they have insurance, and make them provide you with proof. If they hurt themselves on a job site or cause damage to your home, you want their insurance paying for it, not yours. Make sure to get everything in writing. When I say everything, I mean everything. This includes quotes, estimates, payments received, and any changes to the original quote/estimate and why those changes are necessary. If you email or text message the contractor, keep records of it in case something negative happens. This type of documentation is very helpful to investigators who are looking into your case.

Make sure that your contractors get the proper permits that are required for whatever work you are having done at your home. I would make it clear from the beginning that you expect them to obtain all of the necessary permits from the town.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

POLICE

During September, there were 1 arrest; 19 911 hang-ups; 20 alarm activations; 4 animal calls; 4 larceny calls; 1 damage to property call; 1 breaking or entering; 7 disturbance calls; 36 assist Fire/EMS calls; 2 motor vehicle collisions; 6 assist other agency calls; 219 traffic stops; 39 citations issued, which included 12 speeding, 1 stop sign/stop light, 7 registration/inspection, 4 license revoked/expired, 13 other traffic violations; 1 alcohol violation and 10 drug violations; 30 beach patrols; 235 business checks; 434 foot patrols; and 101 residence checks. Police personnel participated in 6.5 training hours. Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) worked 19.5 hours..

FIRE AND EMS

During September, responders handled 3 fires, 16 rescue and emergency medical service incidents, 4 service calls, 2 hazardous condition (no fire) calls and 18 false alarm and false calls. Personnel participated in 224 training hours

REMINDER: Lock your doors, especially your vehicles, and don't leave valuables in sight. Report suspicious people or vehicles to dispatch (726-1911) so that the police can be notified. You are not "bothering" the police if you call to report something that doesn't look right. They prefer to assess the situation rather than find out after the fact that you had noticed something and didn't report it. Alert citizens are assets to the community.

The Shoreline

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ARTICLE DEADLINE

DUE DATE	ISSUE
Wed., Nov. 13	Dec.
Wed., Dec. 11	Jan. 2020
Wed., Jan. 15	Feb.
Wed., Feb. 12	March
Wed., March 13	April
Wed., April 15	May
Wed., May 13	June
Mon., June 15	July

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The 19th of the month prior to desired issue
Articles always welcome.