From: Attorney General Ellen F. Rosenblum [mailto:attorneygeneral@doj.state.or.us]
Sent: Thursday, August 8, 2013 3:12 PM
To:
Subject: Locked Out? Don't Fall for this Locksmith Scam!



## Oregon Department of Justice FINANCIAL FRAUD/CONSUMER PROTECTION SECTION SCANALERT

## Locked Out? Don't Fall for this Locksmith Scam!

The Oregon Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Construction Contractors Board (CCB) are warning citizens to be on the alert for bogus locksmiths.

Complaints to the DOJ and CCB reveal that several locksmith companies, all using similar methods, are significantly overcharging consumers, charging consumers for unnecessary services, using intimidation tactics, and failing to give refunds or respond to consumer complaints.



Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum

"You may be quoted a price on the phone, but when the locksmith arrives, often in an unmarked vehicle, he often wants significantly more money or claims to only accept payment in cash," says Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum.

Sadly, this is a typical scenario for a locksmith scam. When a Beaverton woman called the first number that popped-up in her Google search, she thought she had reached a local locksmith. But when the man on the other end asked her if she was calling from Portland, Maine, she knew something was wrong. And it only got worse from there. The "locksmith" arrived in a van clearly identified as associated with a company other than the one she had called and he wanted to charge her more than twice the amount she was quoted on the phone. Fearing she was being scammed, she called another locksmith only to learn the "locksmith" standing next to her car was a fraud. The going rate to unlock her car according to this legitimate locksmith - \$80; not the \$139 this "locksmith" was demanding.

Rich Blank, Enforcement Manager with the CCB says "It is very important to know who you are doing business with before hiring a locksmith. There is a large number of fake addresses and phone numbers on the Internet, crowding out the good guys. Legitimate locksmiths in Oregon have passed a certification exam and undergone a criminal background check. Working as a locksmith without proper Oregon certification is illegal."

To help you protect yourself from the bad guys, the DOJ and CCB urge you to follow these tips:

- First, find a certified locksmith before you need one. Don't just sign-on with the first listing in a Google search. Get references from the CCB online at <u>https://ccbed.ccb.state.or.us/ccb\_frames/consumer\_info/</u>.
- Once you've found a reputable locksmith, keep the company's name and contact information in your phone, wallet, or address book at home or at work.

- Avoid any company that answers the phone with a generic phrase such as "locksmith services" rather than with a specific company name.
- Be wary of locksmiths who arrive in unmarked cars, trucks, or vans. Legitimate locksmiths usually have a vehicle with the company name.
- Ask for an ID with name and address. Oregon requires that on all service calls locksmiths carry proof that they are license
- Get a written estimate on company letterhead, with mileage charges, minimums and other fees, before work begins. Get a receipt after you pay.
- If you're told the lock has to be drilled and replaced, find another locksmith. Experienced and legitimate locksmiths can unlock almost any door.

If you think you have been a victim of a bogus locksmith, contact the Oregon Department of Justice online at <u>www.oregonconsumer.gov</u>, by phone at 1-877-877-9392, or by email at <u>help@oregonconsumer.gov</u>.





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