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How To Avoid Spring Time Carpet Cleaning Scams

Nine tough questions you can ask a carpet cleaner to avoid being ripped off.

/24-7PressRelease/ - April 05, 2008 - Just as sure as the sunrise, it's guaranteed to happen every Spring. They promise to clean all the carpets in your house for \$59.00. Sound too good to be true? It probably is. To make matters worse, they finally show up three hours late in a beat up pick-up truck with no company name, and hop out in torn jeans and a soiled tee-shirt. Then you realize it: you've been the victim of a bait -and -switch campaign.

What is bait and switch?

Bait and switch scams work like this: a company advertises cleaning a roomful of carpet for a ridiculously low price. When they arrive, they inform you the price they quoted is only for the traffic lanes and doesn't include any cleaning chemicals. "That's like taking a bath with no soap," says textile inspector Rodney Mortillaro at AllstateCleaning.Com. So you agree to pay extra for the chemicals because you are thankful someone showed up. In the end, the final bill ends up costing you hundreds of dollars.

Another typical scam is hearing that a company will clean a set amount of rooms for a very low price (like 5 rooms for \$49.00). After they begin, you discover a linen closet, hallway, foyer, or regular closet counts as a room, and you wind up paying a lot more than you thought you would. Bait-and-switch scams are especially targeted at the elderly. Seniors are more likely to be intimidated by high pressure tactics and by someone who "promises" to give them a good deal.

Professional carpet cleaning technicians will arrive in a company vehicle with company identification on the side. They may also be uniformed, should be well groomed, and should provide some sort of business or certification card. If they are more like person described at the beginning of this story, then don't let them in.

So how can you avoid a bait-and-switch scam?

The best protection against bait-and-switch is to ask some pointed questions before the cleaner arrives at your home. Call several local cleaning companies. If the company cannot answer simple questions, move on to another company. Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Here are 9 questions you should ask:

1. Are you certified in carpet cleaning? If not, what type of formal training do you have?
2. How many years has your company been in business? (the longer, the better)
3. Can you provide a list of references I can call?
4. Is your company drug, alcohol and criminal free? (Companies that don't screen their employees can put you and your loved ones at risk. To be on the safe side, DO NOT deal with companies or cleaners who don't pre-screen and drug test their employees)
5. Can you provide proof of insurance and a business license?
6. What steps will be included in your cleaning process?
7. How long will it take for the carpet to dry?
8. Do you offer free, no-obligation, on-site written quotations?
- 9 . Do you offer a written, satisfaction or money back guarantee?

After your questions have been answered, you also may want to check the firm's reputation with the Better Business Bureau at www.bbb.org. You can also check the consumer affairs department of your state's attorney general's office. "You'd be shocked at the number of companies that have lousy reputations when it comes to addressing consumer complaints", says Mortillaro.

When you have decided on a cleaner, make sure you pay your bill with a major credit card. Sometimes it's difficult getting a cleaner to come back to fix a problem after you've paid the bill. Paying by credit card will give you an option to dispute the bill if the problem is not resolved to your satisfaction. For a free report on how to select a carpet cleaner see, How To Select A Professional Carpet Cleaning Company and the Oriental Rug Guide at <http://www.AllstateCleaning.Com>