



SCAM ALERT

A Consumer Information Update from
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Beware of HVAC Frauds!

As the nights get cooler and thoughts turn to getting your home ready for winter, con artists who pose as furnace inspectors start making their rounds. Many will use scare tactics such as concerns about gas leaks, or high carbon monoxide levels, as a trick to get inside your home. Once they are in your home they may steal valuables, such as jewelry or cash. Others will offer bogus tests or repairs and then charge a large fee. The most costly scam involves those who convince the homeowner that their furnace needs an expensive repair or needs to be replaced, when the furnace is actually fine. The victim then gets a large bill and potentially a damaged or dangerous furnace.

Recently this type of scam was prosecuted by the Adult Protection Unit of the Montgomery County Prosecutor's Office. The defendant, James Jackson, inspected the victim's furnace and told the victim that she needed a new "circuit board" and that it would cost \$986. The defendant then pretended to install the circuit board. The victim's furnace still did not work properly so the victim contacted another furnace contractor. The legitimate contractor told the victim that no work was done and that their model did not even have a circuit board. Investigation later revealed that the defendant had committed this scam against numerous elderly community members. The defendant was convicted on numerous felonies and the victim's money returned.

Having your furnace periodically inspected and serviced is a good idea, but proceed wisely. Always use a reputable contractor. Call the Dayton Better Business Bureau at 937-222-5825. They can verify if the repairman is licensed and has a good business rating. Ask the potential contractor for references. If your estimate seems excessive, get a second opinion from an additional furnace service company.

The Adult Protection Unit of the Montgomery County Prosecutor's Office is committed to the prevention of crime and educational outreach. Upon request, the office will provide a presentation especially tailored to benefit seniors and/or consumers. By educating the community on crime prevention techniques and by getting citizens involved in crime prevention activities, we can reduce the number of crimes and increase the quality of life for our citizens.

If you would like additional information regarding this program, please contact Jennifer Heapy, Supervising Attorney, Adult Protection Unit, or Sarah Schenck, Supervising Attorney, Fraud and Economic Crimes Unit at 937-225-5757.

We would like to send *SCAM ALERT* updates to you electronically. Please send your e-mail address to: newsletter@mcpo.com to be added to our distribution list.