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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Prosecuting Attorney Heck Warns of Tornado Scams

Reminds Pets Owners to be Mindful of Their Needs, Too

DAYTON, OH (05/31/2019) – With the widespread, devastating damage across Montgomery County, Prosecuting Attorney Mat Heck, Jr. announced today that fraudulent contractors and scammers are in our area, trying to take advantage of those who were affected.

Prosecutor Heck said, “I’m proud and inspired by the way our community has come together over the past few days. Neighbors who have never met before are seen hugging and supporting each other. Community groups, church groups, and complete strangers are helping those in our community who are struggling. However, these types of tragedies bring out both the best and the worst in people. There are those who track and follow devastating storms and then go to those areas in an attempt to lie, cheat, steal, and swindle those who were affected.”

Prosecutor Heck noted that our area is being inundated with people pretending to be legitimate contractors. They go door-to-door offering services or claiming to be collecting donations for storm relief. “Don’t fall for their high-pressure tactics. Legitimate local businesses are probably not going door-to-door looking for work, but others, whether local or even from out of state, are showing up offering to be hired on the spot.”

Here are some tips on what you should do and what you should look for before agreeing to hire one of these contractors:

- Ask for a written, itemized estimate of the work they are offering to do.
- Ask for a business card or other identification.
- Be wary of unmarked vehicles and work trucks. If possible, photograph the contractor’s license plate or their identification. This information can be very valuable in the event law enforcement becomes involved.
- Call the Better Business Bureau or visit their website to check out the business’ rating.
- Be especially wary of anyone who demands full payment before doing any work.
- Be wary of people going door-to-door asking for donations for storm victims. Give to local, known agencies that can utilize donations to best help those in need. Vague descriptions of how the money will be used should be a red flag.

Prosecutor Heck added, "If you are approached by contractors who appear to be fraudulent, call the Better Business Bureau and report them. If you have paid them money and received no services, call your local police agency or my Consumer Fraud Unit to report the problem. If we determine the contractor is breaking the law, we will investigate and prosecute the offender."

Prosecutor Heck noted that it's important to understand that if you hire a contractor and they complete the work but it is of poor workmanship or you are not satisfied with their work, law enforcement is not going to be able to assist you. "Poor workmanship is not a crime. That is why it is so vitally important that you deal with companies and contractors who you trust, or that have a good reputation," Heck added.

Prosecutor Heck also noted that is important to be mindful of our pets' needs during events such as we are experiencing. It is very traumatic for them, as well. We need to ensure that they are properly cared for, fed and housed. The Humane Society of Greater Dayton is helping to provide resources to pet owners.

Prosecutor Heck ended by noting, "It is our sincere wish that the cooperation and hope that we see now continues into the future. We have many neighbors who will be hurting for a long time. The need is great; some have lost everything. The last thing they need right now is to be re-victimized by getting ripped off by shady contractors and scammers."

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS AND WEBSITES:

Montgomery County Prosecutor's Office Consumer Fraud Unit: 937-225-4747 or www.mcpo.com

Dayton Better Business Bureau: 937-222-5825 or www.bbb.org

Humane Society of Greater Dayton: 937-268-PETS (7387) or www.hsdayton.org

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For more information, contact Mr. Greg Flannagan, Public Information Officer, at 937.225.5610 or info@mcpo.com