



Board of County Commissioners | Consumer Protection Agency

### **Quick Fact:**

**92% of online locksmiths are either unlicensed or scam artists.\***

## *National Consumer Protection Week*

### *Tip Of The Day*

#### *Beware Of Phony Locksmiths*

#### **How phony locksmiths operate**

- Phony locksmiths advertise in the phone book or on the Web using local telephone numbers and addresses belonging to unsuspecting residents, businesses or even vacant property.
- Unscrupulous locksmiths use several names and telephone numbers that are returned to the same answering service, which may be a call center in another city.
- The call center gives you a low competitive quote and dispatches a local technician to assist you.
- The technician drives an unmarked vehicle and charges you more money than was quoted, and tries to intimidate you into paying the increased fee with cash - "Bait 'n Switch."
- The unscrupulous locksmith leaves you with a generic receipt with no identifying information.

#### **What you should do**

- Research a locksmith before you call and find an established local locksmith with 24-hour service.
- Ask for a business card and program the information into your home and mobile phones to keep it handy.
- Check locksmiths with the Florida Attorney General's Office, the County Consumer Protection Agency, and the Better Business Bureau to make sure no unresolved complaints are on file.
- Ask roadside assistance services for a list of pre-approved companies that can unlock your car.
- Ask family and friends for recommendations and referrals.
- Verify a locksmith's address using Web sites that allow you to match phone numbers with street addresses.
- Ask for an estimate on the phone for the total cost of the work.
- Always ask about additional fees such as mileage, or a minimum service charge fee.
- Always ask the locksmith for identification, including a business card.
- Check to see if the invoice includes the company's name, and whether the vehicle has a name that matches the business card or invoice.
- If the price the locksmith provides is different from the phone estimate, do not allow the work to be done.
- Never sign a blank form authorizing work.
- Ask for proof of insurance in case you sustain damage during the repair or if faulty work leads to loss or damage.
- Get an itemized invoice after the work is completed.

#### **Contact you should know**

- Florida Attorney General
  - ◊ [myfloridalegal.com](http://myfloridalegal.com)
  - ◊ Toll-free Fraud Hotline: 1-866-9-NO-SCAM (1-866-966-7226)
- Better Business Bureau
  - ◊ [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)

\*Online Better Business Bureau

**Be an educated consumer!**

**Visit [www.hillsboroughcounty.org/consumerprotection](http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/consumerprotection)**

**Hillsborough County Consumer Protection Agency | 813-903-3430**