

NEWS RELEASE

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HOW TO AVOID APPLIANCE REPAIR SCAMS, FRAUD

SACRAMENTO, CA – The California Department of Consumer Affairs' Bureau of Household Goods and Services (BHGS) is reminding consumers about the importance of doing business with licensed appliance repair companies.

Consumers should be particularly wary of referral companies posing as repair services. In that scenario, referral companies take leads and deposits from consumers, only to resell the contact information to potentially unlicensed companies. Unlicensed activity is illegal and often leaves consumers with little or no recourse to resolve problems with an unlicensed company.

BHGS protects California consumers through the licensing and regulation of consumer electronic and appliance repair businesses, as well as the home furnishing, thermal insulation, and household moving industries. According to BHGS Chief Justin Paddock, "BHGS encourages consumers to always check the license before engaging in business with a company. Taking the extra step to check a license could prevent a consumer from getting scammed and becoming a victim of fraud."

Here are a few simple ways consumers can protect themselves from unlicensed activity:

- Visit BHGS's website, <https://bhgs.dca.ca.gov>, to verify the company has the required state License/Registration before you hire.
- Check the reviews and complaints online, with the Better Business Bureau, and social media.
- Beware of companies demanding upfront deposits, especially large amounts.

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- Watch out for companies that do not disclose or make it hard to determine where they are from.
- Get an estimate in writing. All estimates must be in writing, with a clear understanding of costs with an agreement by both parties involved, providing documentation with a valid address, phone and license number printed on all receipts.
- All repairs require an invoice that clearly shows itemized costs of parts and labor and must contain the company's license number.

Watch for these red flags:

- A technician from a different company contacts you for more information following your initial request for services.
- Overly large deposit fees being demanded.
- Unclear invoicing, receipting, workorders for parts and labor breakdowns.
- Parts provided and old parts taken out are not identified and accounted for, properly documented, or offered to the consumer to keep.
- Different company names being used, unclear identity, no name or identification from or with a licensed registered company.

While legitimate companies may use subcontractors to complete the work, all parties must be registered by BHGS.

Consumers with a concern about an appliance repair company, or unlicensed activity can file a complaint with BHGS online at <https://bhgs.dca.ca.gov> so concerns can be investigated.

ABOUT THE BUREAU OF HOUSEHOLD GOODS AND SERVICES: *The Bureau of Household Goods and Services' mission is to protect and serve consumers while ensuring a fair and competitive marketplace through licensing and regulation of the electronic and appliance repair, home furnishings, thermal insulation, and household moving industries in California. For more information, visit <https://bhgs.dca.ca.gov>.*

ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS: *The Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) protects consumers through oversight, enforcement, and licensure of professions, and helps consumers learn how to protect themselves from unscrupulous and unqualified individuals. Consumers can verify a license and file a complaint against a licensee online at www.dca.ca.gov or by phone at (800) 952-5210.*