

Olds Rural Crime Watch

Neighbours looking after each other



oldsruralcrimewatch.ca

Yearly Movement of "Travelers" to Canada to Conduct Home Improvement Scams

Also referred to as Gypsy/Irish Pavers

Known in enforcement circles as "Travelers", they are a distinct group of nomadic individuals historically of Irish, Scottish and English descent that arrive in Canada (from the USA, the United Kingdom and Ireland) and are operating as unlicensed, itinerant contractors. They usually reside in campgrounds or trailers parks just outside major urban centers working the rural peripheries of the larger centers and small rural communities. They tend to visit southern Alberta in the spring each year. The groups run scams involving paving, painting, roofing, rain gutters, chimney repair or any other home renovations.

A typical sales pitch is that they are working in the neighborhood and can offer a reduced rate on a particular job. Their work may be of poor quality and the consumer ends up paying considerably more to fix the shoddy outcome. Targets of these groups are often seniors who succumb to high pressure sales tactics. The Travelers hound their victims until they have received as much money as the scam artist feels he/she can get out of their victim.

Education, prevention and consumer awareness are the best ways to deal with unscrupulous contractors. Investigations after the fact may not have successful outcomes: these individuals typically stay in a community for only a short time, making it difficult for police to identify, locate and when possible obtain evidence and charge them. It is important for homeowners to know their rights and the protections that exist so that they can be confident in the people they hire. Service Alberta has an eight page Home Renovations Tipsheet that helps homeowners determine a qualified and competent contractor:

www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/pdf/tipsheets/Home_Renovations.pdf

Possible warning signs:

- knock on your door offering a special price because they just happen to be doing work in the area.
- promise a discount if you allow them to use your home to advertise their work. The same offer is likely made to everyone.
- quote a price without seeing the actual job
- demand a large down payment for materials
- conduct a free inspection of your home and then suggest major repairs
- unmarked truck or van with out of province licence plates
- no business identification
- local address or phone number
- no local references

Any type of Home Improvement Scams should be directed to the nearest RCMP Detachment or local Police station within your jurisdiction.

Olds-Didsbury-Sundre Rural Crime Watch
Box 4226, Olds, AB T4H 1P8
Phone: 403-556-8846
E-Mail: info@oldsruralcrimewatch.ca
Olds Community Policing E-Mail: ocp@oldsruralcrimewatch.ca