New York State Office of the Attorney General

Recovering from the Storm

Dear New Yorkers,

As you work to get your lives and your property back in order, be aware of price gouging and be sure to check out any contractors before you hire them. It will be time well spent to make sure your money is also well spent.

If you are the victim of a contracting scam or price gouging, contact local law enforcement and report it to my office. You can contact us through our Consumer Helpline, on our website, or call any of our offices listed below.

Sincerely,

Eric T. Schneiderman
Attorney General

Regional Offices

Albany.....518-474-5481
Binghamton.....607-721-8771
Brooklyn.....718-722-3949
Buffalo.....716-853-8400
Harlem.....212-961-4475
Nassau.....516-248-3302
New York City.....212-416-8000
Plattsburgh.....518-562-3282
Poughkeepsie.....845-485-3900
Rochester.....585-546-7430
Syracuse.....315-448-4800
Suffolk.....631-231-2424
Utica.....315-793-2225
Watertown.....315-785-2444
Westchester.....914-422-8755

Consumer Helpline

800-771-7755

www.ag.ny.gov

Consumer Tips

Property Cleanup and Repair

Repairing buildings and driveways, clearing downed trees — you may need to hire professionals to complete these jobs. Here are some tips to keep in mind.

Check with your insurance company.
Before making any decisions, be clear about what will be covered and any steps you will need to take.

Ask for references, check for licenses.
Ask about local work contractors have done. Talk to the people who hired them; look at the jobs if you can. Make sure the contractor has all necessary licenses required by your local government.

Estimates are important: get it in writing.
Ask that all estimates for work be in writing and include a description of the material to be used. Be clear that you will not pay for work done that is not agreed upon in writing. Verify that the material used is the same as described in the estimate. Make sure any changes to the estimate are in writing.

Use a contractor with an address you can verify.
If your contractor is "here today and gone tomorrow," you may find it difficult to enforce the guarantee.

Never pay the full price up front.
Establish a payment schedule and adhere to it. Withhold final payment until the entire project is completed to your satisfaction and all required inspections and certificates of occupancy are finalized.

Always be sure the contractor has valid insurance.
If a worker is injured, or damage is caused on your property, you could be held liable if your contractor does not have the required insurance.

Check with your town or city for required permits.
Don't let a contractor work without the necessary permits. Failing to get approvals can delay your project, or prevent you from occupying a completed building.

Price Gouging

New York State law forbids those selling essential consumer goods and services — like food, water, gas, generators, batteries and flashlights, and services such as transportation — from charging excessive prices during an abnormal disruption of the market. If you believe you are a victim of price gouging, contact the Attorney General's Consumer Helpline at 800-771-7755 or find a complaint form online at:
www.ag.ny.gov