



Gypsies and Gypsy Scams

For local law enforcement purposes, the word "gypsy" refers to people who travel in small groups across the country perpetrating crimes of petty theft, larceny, burglary, and fraud. Over the past several summers, residents of local area communities have been victims of what have become known as "gypsy scams."

Gypsy scams are incidents that occur in daylight hours, in which the suspect will, literally, walk right into someone's home for the purpose of stealing jewelry or money. Very often, the homeowner is either in or near the home. If these individuals are caught, they give some kind of excuse as to why they are in the home or on the property. So far, these individuals have not been violent and usually run from the residence as soon as they are discovered.

The best way to keep these individuals from victimizing you is to simply keep your home locked, even when you are working in the yard. Remember, anytime you are outside your home, you cannot possibly see every door on your home that a would-be thief would use.

As with any suspicious circumstance, call the Franklin/Bingham Farms Police Department immediately. The non-emergency number is (248) 626-5444. And, of course, 911 is still the number to call for emergencies.

Driveway Seal Coating Scams

A typical seal coating scam often occurs in the following manner: the suspect approaches the homeowner with a claim of having "left-over" coating material (usually in the bed of a pick-up truck), and contracts to seal the homeowner's driveway. Once the homeowner pays for the job, the suspect sprays a cheap oily material on the driveway and leaves.

Tips: Do not respond to door-to-door solicitors. If you need your driveway seal coated, you make the contact. Rely on friends and relatives for recommendations and referrals.

Contractor Fraud

Beware of 'contractors' who come to your home or call you on the phone looking for work. Some will tell you they were just 'passing by' and noticed you needed a new roof, siding, or driveway (you fill in the blank). They may not be contractors, at all, not trained, not licensed, nor insured. These con artists will usually offer the work at a price far below what you'd expect to pay for it. And, more often than not, they will require you to pay in advance. The bottom line: you give them the money and never see them again.

Professional, legitimate contractors never need to go door-to-door to get work, and they almost never require any money in advance before starting the work. If they do, find another contractor.

Don't sign any contract before reading it. Better yet, have your attorney look at it first. Call the contractor's insurance company and make sure his / her policy is in effect. Check with the Secretary of State to make sure the contractor is licensed. Ask the contractor for references.

If you need work done on your home and need to find a contractor, contact the larger home improvement stores for a list of companies that do work for them. Or, ask neighbors who have done work on their home