



# FRAUD ALERT!

From the Office of Lee County  
Sheriff Mike Scott

CASE  
partnership

## Beware of Traveling Trouble

A cool breeze, low humidity and the return of friends and neighbors from up north can only mean one thing; fall has once again arrived in Southwest Florida. Unfortunately, this time of year also means the arrival of “Gypsies” and “Travelers” who head our way looking for an opportunity to take advantage of those in need of various home repairs. This alert from the Lee County Sheriff’s Office serves as a reminder to be on the lookout for these con-artists who are very good at persuading, convincing and finally separating you from your money.

The con starts with a knock on your door and an offer to do repairs around your home. These repairs could be roof coating/repair of shingles, asphalt paving/driveway sealing, house painting, tree trimming/landscaping, and termite/pest control, just to name a few. They offer to do the work and charge you less than what a reputable local company would charge. The idea of paying less money is always a welcoming thought, but you must remember that doing business with someone that is just passing through can prove to be a disastrous decision. After receiving a deposit or the full amount, you are told they are going to get supplies and will return. Some take the money and run; others return but provide extremely poor labor resulting in additional monies being spent at a later date to fix the original problem.

These thieves have also been known to con their way into your home on the pretense of using your phone, checking for leaks, selling a must have item, etc. While inside your home they look for valuables, easy items to pocket and/or your personal information. Some work in pairs and while one of them has your attention, the other is working their way through your home taking what isn’t theirs. Below are a few tips to keep in mind:

- Never let a stranger in your home!
- Never give full payment for the job until it is complete.
- Don’t do business with door-to-door contractors.
- Beware of high pressure sales tactics and the familiar story of having left over material from another job.
- Keep all doors including the garage door closed and locked at all times; especially when you are outside working in the yard. Stepping away from the front of the house to retrieve something in the backyard is all the time needed to gain access to your home.
- Install security doors with metal grillwork and key locks instead of latched screen doors.
- Do not hide keys under the doormat or rocks.
- Secure sliding glass doors with anti-slide block or slide bolt.
- Contact the Better Business Bureau (BBB) at 239.334.4648 or, [www.sunbiz.org](http://www.sunbiz.org) to verify the company is who they say they are.
- Check your warranty! You may already be covered at no cost to you.

**If you have questions about this or if you have received a call and would like to report it, please contact the Fraud Hotline at 239-477-1242.**



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