



“CAN WE TALK?”

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BUYER BEWARE WHEN CALLING A CONTRACTOR TO PERFORM HOME MAINTENANCE

I received a call the other day from a senior citizen that had hired a contractor to perform maintenance on her furnace. The contractor told her the furnace was unsafe and needed to be replaced. With the estimate in hand she went to her bank to borrow the money to have the work done. The loan officer after looking at the estimate realized there was another senior sitting at his desk with the same story and an estimate for a new furnace from the same contractor a day earlier. The loan was denied and the banker suggested the owner get a second opinion. Guess what the second opinion revealed? That’s right, the furnace was fine and they replaced the filter. These kinds of scams happen all too often and our senior citizens are usually the targets.

Another call I received involved a widow that had a person come to her door asking if there was any work she need done. She had a light switch in the garage that wasn’t working and asked if he could fix it. He said he could fix it and would fix it for her. She thought he indicated he would fix it for free. Two weeks later the guy is still there doing all kinds of wiring in the garage and who knows what else. The guy is a landscaper out of Pueblo, not a licensed electrician. The woman’s daughter called me with this information and said she had talked to the landscaper and informed him that her mother had no money to pay him. He said that she had agreed to pay him \$100.00. That amount might cover 2 hrs of work by an electrical contractor not two weeks. Who knows what might have been stolen from this lady’s garage over that time?

Maintenance on our homes is very important, especially when it comes to furnaces. Filters need to be replaced several times a year, more often if there are dogs or cats in the home.

Minor maintenance such as filter replacement does not require a license or a permit. Actually, many people perform these tasks themselves. However; if you hire all of your maintenance done be very careful about who you call. Be sure to ask for references and contact the references supplied. Whenever possible get at least three estimates for any major work you are considering having done. Never hire someone that comes to your door soliciting work. Work items referred to as 'Emergency Repairs' may not be actual emergencies. If you are being pressured to a hire someone to perform an 'Emergency Repair,' step back and tell the person you are going to get a second opinion. If you suspect a gas leak or the presence of carbon monoxide you can call your utility provider as they usually will send a technician by to check it out – often at no cost to you.

We should all be installing carbon monoxide detectors in our homes. It's very easy to install them as you can buy detectors that simply plug into a standard electrical outlet. Follow the recommended installation locations that should be included in the paperwork inside the packaging with the one(s) you purchase.

If you are not sure whether the work you are having done requires a licensed contractor or a permit, give us a call at 719-327-2881 or check on our website at www.pprbd.org. There are many quality licensed contractors in El Paso County. However; like any industry there are always a few bad apples in the mixed that give the industry a bad name. There are no questions on the required tests to obtain a license that pertain to ethics, so as I've said in the past "do your homework and BUYER BEWARE!"

All of my previous columns are available on our website www.pprbd.org

Submit your questions to: terryb@pprbd.org or mail to: Pikes Peak

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