

## Home Repair Fraud

Your home may be your most valuable financial asset. That's why it's important to be cautious when you hire someone to work on it. Home improvement, repair and maintenance contractors often advertise in newspapers, the Yellow Pages, and on the radio and TV. However, don't consider the ad as an indication of the quality of a contractor's work. Your best bet is a reality check from those in the know: friends, neighbors, or co-workers who have had home improvement work done. Then, 1) get a written estimate from several firms; 2) ask for explanations for price variations and 3) don't automatically choose the lowest bidder. Remember your goal is to get a quality job at the best price. Here are some tip-offs that you are looking at a potential rip-off. For example a less than reputable contractor may:

- Solicits door-to-door;
- Ask you to pay for the entire job up-front;
- Only accepts cash payments;
- Pressures you for an immediate decision;
- Does not list a business number in the local telephone directory;
- Just happens to have materials left over from a previous job;
- Asks you to get the required building permits;
- Tells you your job will be a "demonstration;"
- Offers exceptionally long guarantees;
- Offers you discounts for finding other customers;
- Suggests that you borrow money from a lender the contractor knows.

If you're not careful, you could lose your home through a home improvement loan scam. Be careful! Don't get nailed! Remember not all contractors operate within the law.