Telemarketing: Tips to Avoid Scams

consumer *brief*

A salesperson calls to offer you a "once-in-a-lifetime" chance to invest in gold coins. The salesperson assures you there's no risk and guarantees a high return on your investment. Sound too good to be true? It is.

Telemarketing, selling products or services by phone, is an important and legitimate $500-billion-a-year business. Telemarketing fraud, however, robs consumers of approximately $40 billion every year. Scam artists peddle everything from overpriced and useless water "purifiers" to credit repair services and new scams are being invented daily.

The Federal Trade Commission passed a regulation aimed at stopping telemarketing scams. The new regulation:

- Prohibits telemarketers from calling you before 8 a.m. or after 9 p.m., and from calling if you have told them you don't want to be called.
- Requires that telemarketers promptly disclose their identity; the purpose of the call; the nature of the goods or services being sold; the odds of winning prizes, if any are offered; the fact that no purchase is necessary to participate, and the method by which you can enter without making a purchase.
- Requires that telemarketers disclose refund and cancellation policies and whether refunds and exchanges are allowed.

Tougher regulations help, but you can play a key role in the fight against telemarketing fraud. Remember:

- Never give your credit card number over the phone unless you initiated the call.
- Never give your checking account number over the phone.
- Never give a telemarketer personal information about yourself, including medical information, driver's license, Social Security or telephone calling card numbers.
- Never pay for a prize. That includes paying postage, shipping, handling or any costs associated with something a caller says you have "won."
- Never allow a caller to pressure you into acting immediately on any offer.
- Never agree to any offer until you have seen it in writing.

Remember... If an offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

IF YOU HAVE BEEN VICTIMIZED

Write to the Office of Consumer Protection, Division of Consumer Affairs, P.O. Box 45025, Newark, New Jersey 07101 or call 973-504-6200 and ask for a complaint form. You may also contact us via e-mail at ***AskConsumerAffairs@lps.state.nj.us*** .

800-242-5846 • www.NJConsumerAffairs.gov

Office of the Attorney General

New Jersey Division of **Consumer Affairs**

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