

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Consumer Protection and fraud prevention is always changing. As fraud prevention professionals develop new authentication and fraud detection solutions, the fraudsters are networking with each other, monetizing, and exchanging information. Fraudsters today are using sophisticated strategies and malware to succeed in their fraudulent activities. Though fraud prevention technology has made great advances and continues to do so, it's important to be aware of fraudulent tactics and understand how to prevent fraud.

If you happen to fall victim to a fraudulent scheme, in many cases the appropriate agency to undertake the initial investigation of a consumer complaint is another specialized regulatory, licensing, or enforcement agency in California. Many of these agencies have authority to take corrective action when their investigations reveal evidence of wrongdoing, including bringing administrative enforcement cases to end the unlawful business conduct. If the investigating agency determines that a matter is appropriate for further prosecution, it will generally refer the case to our office or another prosecutor's office, such as the California Attorney General's Office. The California Attorney General's Office has a comprehensive Complaint Referral Table that is a great resource for

assisting consumers with determining the appropriate agency to contact depending on the type of complaint and industry it involves:

<https://oag.ca.gov/consumers/complaint-referral-table>

The Ventura County District Attorney's Office, Consumer Protection Unit investigates and prosecutes civil and criminal cases to enforce laws protecting the public against unlawful, unfair, and fraudulent business practices and deceptive advertising. Investigators and attorneys in this unit seek to increase public awareness of issues regarding consumers through presentations to schools, service clubs and other groups.

Our office is committed to supporting the Ventura County community and providing a means of reporting individuals and businesses engaged in unlawful business practices. Public protection is our priority. We encourage you to file a complaint if you are aware of a fraudulent or unlawful business practice taking place in Ventura County. You can find our Consumer Fraud Complaint forms (English and Spanish versions available) at the link below.
<https://da.venturacounty.gov/mediacenter/publications/>

TIPS TO PREVENT BECOMING A VICTIM

As the first line of defense against fraud, however, consumers must be constantly on guard. Consumer fraud is a uniquely preventable crime. By learning about current rip-offs in the marketplace and by following basic tips on smart consumer behavior, you can protect yourself and help us protect all the consumers of Ventura County.

- Check on the reliability and reputation of the firm/ company you are dealing with.
- If you are unsure about documents you are about to sign, have a trusted friend or relative review them before signing.
- Make sure that the price you pay matches the advertised price you see.
- If you are dealing with a contractor, check with the contractor's license board.
- Make sure all guarantees, warranties and promises are in writing.
- If you have any doubts, think it over. Don't be pressured into buying.
- Keep all receipts, warranties and instructions in a safe, convenient place.

SCAM PREVENTION

To avoid being scammed, be cautious about sharing personal information, never rush into decisions, verify the legitimacy of any unexpected contact, do your research on businesses or individuals before engaging, and never send money to someone you don't know or trust; if something seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Key points to remember:

Protect your personal information:

Don't share sensitive details like bank account numbers, passwords, or social security numbers with anyone you don't fully trust.

Be wary of unexpected contact:

If you receive a suspicious email, text, or phone call from someone you don't know, be skeptical and don't rush to respond.

Do your research:

Before making transactions or providing personal information, verify the legitimacy of the company or individual by checking their online presence and reviews.

Resist pressure tactics:

Scammers often try to pressure you into making quick decisions. Take your time to consider any offer and never feel obligated to act immediately.

Check for red flags:

Look for spelling errors, unusual urgency, overly enticing deals, or requests for unusual payment methods.

Use secure payment methods:

When shopping online, only use trusted platforms and payment methods that offer buyer protection.

Be cautious on social media:

Be mindful of what you share on social media and avoid clicking on suspicious links or interacting with unknown accounts.

REPORT SCAMS:

If you believe you've become the victim of a scam, report it immediately to the appropriate local law enforcement agency in your area. Also, complete the IC3 Complaint Form with the FBI.
<https://complaint.ic3.gov/>

ADDITIONAL CONSUMER RESOURCES

Federal Trade Commission

1-877-382-4357 or TTY 1-866-653-4261.

<https://reportfraud.ftc.com>

Ventura County Human Services Agency

805-477-7300 or <https://www.vcaaa.org>

California Contractors State License Board

(562) 590-5331 or (626) 815-8468

[https://www.cslb.ca.gov/Consumers/Filing A Complaint](https://www.cslb.ca.gov/Consumers/FilingAComplaint)



Ventura County District Attorney Consumer Protection Resources

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805-662-1750

Hours: Monday – Friday

8:00 am – 5:00 pm

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