



Joint Situational Awareness Bulletin

Community Alert

(U) Community Alert: Home Improvement Scams Likely to Increase in the Warmer Months

Warm weather brings the potential for increased solicitation by international travelers offering residents home improvement work. These scams typically target the elderly and disabled. Suspects often damage portions of a victim's home or exaggerate the need for repairs during initial inspection. These scams often begin as a small masonry/construction job that gets larger as the work progresses and victims are pressured to pay to complete the job at increasingly higher rates. In past years, Massachusetts residents have paid tens of thousands of dollars for masonry, driveway, paving, roofing, and other home improvement / repairs only to be left with damaged property or little to no improvement. Massachusetts residents are urged to take precautions from becoming a victim.

Background:

- Many of these individuals are traveling to the US under a program that DOES NOT allow them to work during their 90-day visit.
- Many of these criminals identified are traveling from Ireland and the United Kingdom.
- Residents are reminded much home repair work requires permits. Residents should refer to their city or town hall for specific permit requirements.
- Additionally, the companies may not have business certificates (DBAs) from their municipality, are recently registered with the [Secretary of the Commonwealth](#) and may have only recently established their website, with glowing reviews.

Tactics used by these criminal actors include:

- Door-to-Door Solicitation – Paper flyers with generic business names (A1 Paving, City & Town Paving, etc.)
- Will offer discounts because of “left over materials” from neighborhood jobs.
- High Pressure – will exaggerate need for work to be done immediately.
- After the initial work is completed, they will indicate more expensive repairs are necessary.
- Individuals may show threatening or intimidating behavior.
- They will ask checks to be made out to them individually and not the company name.

Recommendations:

- Any unknown person approaching you to do **any** work on your home should be viewed as a potential scammer.
- It is best practice to obtain a minimum of two estimates for home repairs from reputable companies who will carry the appropriate insurance, licenses, apply for the appropriate permits, and provide references and coverage to you for their work after completion.
- Check if the contractor holds a registered [Home Improvement Contractor](#) license through the Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation. If the company does have an HIC license, homeowners can file a [complaint](#), [request arbitration](#), and possibly apply for the [HIC Guaranty Fund](#).
- Residents who feel they have been victimized should contact their police department of jurisdiction and provide as much information as possible to include vehicles and license plates.