



News Release

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BBB® warns of bait and switch air duct cleaners

Pensacola, Fla. (Feb. 4, 2011) – Your Better Business Bureau Serving Northwest Florida has noticed ads running locally that may be cause for concern based on investigations in at least 20 other states. Ads offering air duct cleaning at extremely low rates may seem like a great deal to homeowners. But Better Business Bureau offices across the country have found that while some businesses advertise unreasonably low rates ranging from \$49.95 to \$89.95, consumers are being charged significantly more.

“Although the businesses are owned by numerous individuals across the country and operate under a variety of different names, the tactics are often the same,” said Norman Wright, president and CEO of BBB|Northwest Florida. “Less-than-reputable businesses bait consumers with unreasonably low rates and then use scare tactics to convince the homeowner they have a mold problem or other risky situation that requires expensive treatments.”

Using mass mail, local advertising and road-side signs, customers are baited with low advertised prices for air duct cleaning services. Once sales agents are in the customers’ homes, they run tests that “find” mold or other unhealthy conditions and tell the owner they must pay hundreds or thousands of dollars for removal or remediation. However, investigations by BBBs have shown that these tests results are often bogus.

When looking for a professional to clean air ducts, your BBB recommends consumers:

- **Check out the business with BBB.** Before having an air duct cleaner come to your home, check out the business with BBB first. Ideally, the business will be a BBB Accredited Business or at least have a good rating from BBB. Pay close attention to the name of the business – unscrupulous outfits often choose a name similar to an existing business with a solid reputation in an attempt to confuse homeowners. Start with bbb.org to get a business’ Reliability Report or to locate a BBB Accredited duct cleaner.
- **Read the fine print.** Ads and contracts may contain fine print which the business might think will absolve them from having to honor their advertised price. Ask questions to verify the final cost before you sign a contract.
- **Get a second opinion.** If the air duct cleaner claims that you have a mold problem or other hazardous situation, get a second opinion. Because mold remediation can cost thousands of dollars, it is well worth the time and money to get a second opinion before agreeing to expensive, possibly unnecessary work.
- **File a complaint with BBB.** If you believe you’ve been the victim of a business’ bait and switch tactics, file a complaint with BBB. Even if BBB isn’t able to resolve the issue for you (which unfortunately has been the case with some fly-by-night businesses), the complaint can at least serve as a warning to other consumers about the business.

For additional information and advice you can trust and to check out a business in advance, start with www.bbb.org or call the Better Business Bureau at 850-429-0002 or 800-729-9226.