



# MDBFAA

A Member of the National Electronic Security Alliance

## Maryland Burglar & Fire Alarm Association

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## Press Release

On summer evenings throughout Maryland neatly dressed summer salesmen are knocking on the doors of people's homes with a clipboard and a smile. A large number of young men, with recent experience knocking on doors, has made the Provo-Orem area of Utah a fertile hotbed to grow the summer sales industry. A four-month selling season capitalizes on the availability of college students in the summer. Managers take teams of about 20 reps to cities across the nation.

MDBFAA President Dick Avnet advises "Most work on commission and incentives, and contests keep the pressure up to make sales. Some complete the process ethically and responsibly, but judging from a number of complaints to news organizations, licensing agencies and better business bureaus, many do not."

Consumers have registered many complaints, including:

- Customers have a problem getting proper attention. Because many of the accounts are sold repeatedly, customers can get shuffled around from marketing company, to provider, to monitoring company.
- Many companies and individuals have not met the Maryland requirement that each company, salesperson and technician be licensed by the Department of State Police.
- Others also fail to comply with local alarm licensing requirements, or to obtain a local license for door to door sales.
- Many falsely claim to represent Honeywell or GE. In reality, neither Honeywell nor GE employs door-to-door salespeople. They do not sell directly to homeowners, and prohibit anyone from representing themselves as agents of the company.
- Others claim to represent the customer's existing alarm company, and falsely tell the customer that they need an upgrade. After the customer signs, they become obligated to two companies for the same services.
- Still others claim to offer a "free" system when in reality customers are committing to an extended contract that has a built in fee for the equipment.

Avnet urges "Consumers to check references for any company, and to ask to see the "photo identification card," issued by the Maryland Department of State Police. If they do not have the card, that would include the salesperson's picture, they are not licensed." He also recommended that "If you currently have a security system, you should check with your current service provider before signing another agreement, to avoid having to pay two separate companies for the same service."

Avnet also advised consumers to report problem companies or individuals to the:

- Maryland Department of State Police- Licensing Division
  - By mail – 1201 Reisterstown Road, Pikesville, Maryland 21208
  - By telephone – 410 653-4500, then dial 5 then dial 0
- Maryland Attorney General - Consumer Protection Division
  - By mail – 200 St. Paul Place, Baltimore, MD 21202
  - By telephone – (410) 528-8662