



CONSUMER NEWS

SAN DIEGO CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Consumer Protection Agencies

October 2012

It can be frustrating to figure out where to file a complaint or report information about a consumer fraud. This newsletter provides general information about some of the many agencies that exist to assist consumers and ensure businesses compete fairly.

A list of the local phone numbers for Consumer Protection Agencies is attached to this newsletter. It contains the phone numbers and website addresses of the agencies mentioned in this newsletter.

FEDERAL AGENCIES:

USFDA: The US Food & Drug Administration is responsible for testing and approving new drugs and devices for the entire country. No product can be sold as a drug or device in our country unless it is approved by the FDA. If a person offers for sale an unapproved drug, that is a violation of federal law. It is also a violation of California State law because California declares it a crime to offer for

sale a drug that is not approved by the FDA. The FDA is also responsible for regulating food products and labeling of food. The FDA must ensure that food and drugs are produced under sanitary conditions and are safe and effective. The FDA conducts recalls of products that are unsafe.

FBI: The Federal Bureau of Investigation is responsible for investigating conduct that violates federal law. Generally, the FBI investigates cases that involve the theft of large sums and cases involving activity that crosses state or national lines.

FTC: The Federal Trade Commission is responsible for protecting consumers against unfair, deceptive, or fraudulent practices in the marketplace. The FTC regulates advertising, warranties, financial practices, data security, high-tech fraud, telemarketing and other scams. The FTC also collects complaints about consumer fraud and identity theft and makes them available to law

enforcement agencies across the country.

CPSC: The US Consumer Product Safety Commission protects the public from unreasonable risks of injury or death from consumer products under the agency's jurisdiction. The CPSC regulates products that pose a fire, electrical, chemical, or mechanical hazard or can injure children.

NHTSA: The Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration sets and enforces safety performance and fuel economy standards for motor vehicles and motor vehicle equipment. NHTSA investigates safety defects in motor vehicles.

USDOJ: The US Attorney Department of Justice Consumer Protection Branch (CPB) is a prosecution office that enforces the consumer protection cases investigated by federal agencies.

STATE AGENCIES:

DCA: The California Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) regulates more than 100 business types and 200 professions, including doctors, dentists, contractors, cosmetologists and automotive repair facilities. The DCA includes 36 regulatory entities (23 boards, six bureaus, four committees, two programs, and one commission). These entities establish minimum qualifications and levels of competency for licenses. They also license, register, or certify practitioners, investigate complaints and discipline violators.

DMS: The California Department of Food and Agriculture, Division of Measurements Standards ensures the accuracy of commercial weighing and measuring devices. The DMS verifies the quantity of both bulk and packaged goods and enforces regulations regarding representations of quantity on product labels.

DMV: The DMV Investigations Division investigates the manufacture or use of fraudulent or counterfeit DMV documents. The DMV also investigates licensed and unlicensed individuals who sell vehicles, vehicle brokers, dismantlers, registration services, vehicle verifiers, driving schools or traffic violator schools, and other vehicle-related businesses.

DOC: The Department of Corporations investigates

complaints about businesses engaged in financial transactions. It licenses and regulates securities brokers and dealers, investment advisers and financial planners, and certain fiduciaries and lenders.

DOJ: The California Dept. of Justice headed by the Attorney General maintains a Consumer Law Section that prosecutes violations of state laws established to protect consumers. The DOJ is currently focused on real estate and bank fraud, but also has jurisdiction to enforce the false advertising and unfair business practices laws statewide. The DOJ also has a Licensing Section which brings actions on behalf of licensing agencies to suspend or revoke licenses issued to individuals who engage in misconduct in their profession.

LOCAL AGENCIES:

AWM: The County Dept. of Agriculture, Weights and Measures Department enforces regulations regarding the safe use of pesticides and organic growers at certified farmers' markets. The Department also checks the accuracy of net quantity in packaged goods, commercial weighing and measuring devices and pricing.

SDPD: The San Diego Police Department Financial Crimes Unit is responsible for the investigation of criminal offenses involving forgeries, check fraud, credit card fraud, bunco schemes, embezzlements, identity theft, bigamy cases and elder fiduciary abuse cases.

District Attorney: The San Diego District Attorney's Consumer Protection Unit is a sub-unit of the Economic Crimes Division, and is devoted to prosecuting fraudulent and unfair business practices within San Diego County. The DA's Office investigates complaints from individuals and businesses and prosecutes civil and criminal consumer fraud violations.

City Attorney: The City Attorney's Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit (CEPU) prosecutes violations of law that arise from consumer transactions or actions that damage the environment occurring in the City of San Diego or Poway. CEPU also investigates complaints of false or misleading advertising. The unit prosecutes violations in both civil and criminal capacities. The agencies discussed in this newsletter bring cases to the City Attorney's Office for prosecution. Consumers can also complain directly to the CEPU about matters not regulated by another agency.

**San Diego
City Attorney's Office
Consumer and Environmental
Protection Unit
(619) 533-5600**

This newsletter was compiled by Graduate Law Clerk Dalia Astalos

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The information provided in this newsletter is intended to convey general information and is not

intended to be relied upon as
legal advice.

To report violations of
consumer protection laws, call
the City Attorney's Hotline at
(619) 533-5600.

CONSUMER REFERRAL LIST

AGENCY/TOPIC	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE
Attorney General , for the State of California	800-952-5225	www.ag.ca.gov
Attorney Complaint Line, State Bar of California	800-843-9053	www.calbar.ca.gov
Attorney Referrals and Complaints (County Bar)	619-231-8585	www.sdcba.org
Automotive Repair, Bureau of	858-716-1025	www.autorepair.ca.gov
Bad Checks	888-240-6495	www.hotchecks.net/sandiego
Bankruptcy Court	619-557-5620	www.casb.uscourts.gov
Better Business Bureau of San Diego	858-496-2131	www.sandiego.bbb.org
Charities: Registry of Charitable Trusts	916-445-2021	www.ag.ca.gov/charities/
City Attorney's Office, Consumer Hotline	619-533-5600	www.sandiego.gov/city-attorney
Consumer Affairs, State of California	800-952-5210	www.dca.ca.gov
Consumer Product Safety Commission	800-638-2772	www.cpsc.gov
Contractors State License Board	800-321-2752	www.cslb.ca.gov
Corporations, Department of	619-525-4233	www.corp.ca.gov
District Attorney's Office, Consumer Hotline	619-531-3507	www.sdcca.org
DMV - Dept. of Motor Vehicles Investigations	858-627-3951	www.dmv.ca.gov
Elder Abuse Information	619-531-3245	www.sandiegoda.com
Electronic and Appliance Repair, Bureau of	916-574-2069	www.bear.ca.gov
EDD - Employment Development Department	800-300-5616	www.edd.ca.gov
FBI - Federal Bureau of Investigations	858-565-1255	www.fbi.gov
FDA - Food & Drug Administration	858-550-3850	www.fda.gov
FEDINFO - Federal Information Center	800-688-9889	www.usa.gov
FTC - Federal Trade Commission	877-382-4357	www.ftc.gov
HMO's - Dept. of Managed Care	888-466-2219	www.hmohelp.ca.gov
Identity Theft - FTC - Federal Trade Commission	877-IDTHEFT	ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/
Identity Theft - Privacy Rights Clearing House	619-298-3396	www.privacyrights.org
Identity Theft Resource Center	858-693-7935	www.idtheftcenter.org
Insurance Fraud (Auto related)	800-390-9618	www.sdcca.org
Insurance Fraud Hotline - District Attorney	619-531-3749	www.sdcca.org
Insurance Fraud Hotline - State of California	800-927-4357	www.insurance.ca.gov
Internet Fraud Complaint Center	Web Resource	www.ic3.gov
IRS - Internal Revenue Service	800-829-3676	www.irs.gov
Labor Commissioner	619-220-5451	www.dir.ca.gov/DLSE
Legal Aid	877-534-2524	www.laszd.org
Medical Board, State of California	800-633-2322	www.medbd.ca.gov
MediCal Fraud	800-822-6222	www.dhcs.ca.gov
National Consumers League	202-835-3323	www.fraud.org
National White Collar Crime Center	800-221-4424	www.nw3c.org
Occupational Safety and Health - Cal/OSHA	619-767-2280	www.dir.ca.gov
Postal Mail Fraud Center	800-372-8347	www.usps.com/postalinspectors
Public Utilities Commission	800-649-7570	www.cpuc.ca.gov
Real Estate Fraud, District Attorney's Office	619-531-3552	www.sdcca.org
Real Estate, Dept. of	619-525-4192	www.dre.ca.gov
Revenue and Recovery	619-515-6200	www.sdcounty.ca.gov/auditor/orrpage.html
San Diego Police Dept. - Financial Crimes	619-531-2545	www.sandiego.gov/police

San Diego Sheriff's Dept. - Financial Crimes	858-974-2322	www.sdsheriff.net
Secret Service	619-557-5640	www.treas.gov/usss
Secretary of State, California	916-653-7244	www.ss.ca.gov
Senior Citizen Legal Services	858-565-1392	www.seniorlaw-sd.org
Small Claims Court Advisor	858-634-1777	www.sdcourt.ca.gov
Social Security Administration	800-772-1213	www.ssa.gov
Social Security Fraud Hotline	800-269-0271	www.ssa.gov
Tax Issues: Board of Equalization	619-525-4526	www.boe.ca.gov
Tax Evasion Hotline	888-334-3300	www.boe.ca.gov/news/evade.htm
Franchise Tax Board	800-852-5711	www.ftb.ca.gov
Telemarketing: Canadian scams - Phonebusters	888-495-8501	www.phonebusters.com
Telemarketing: Do Not Call List - FTC	877-382-4357	www.ag.ca.gov/donotcall
Telemarketing: general complaints - Postal Insp.	626-405-1200	www.postalinspectors.uspis.gov
Transporation, Dept. of - California	916-654-5266	www.dot.ca.gov
Travel, Sellers of - Attorney General's Office	213-897-8065	www.ag.ca.gov/travel
U.S. Attorney's Office	619-557-5610	www.usdoj.gov
U.S.D.A.	800-727-9540	www.usda.gov
UCAN, Fraud Squad Hotline, for complaints regarding utility companies	619-696-6966	www.ucan.org
Weights and Measures, Dept. of	858-694-2778	www.sdcounty.ca.gov/awm
Welfare Fraud Hotline	800-421-2252	www.co.san-diego.ca.us
List prepared by San Diego City Attorney's Consumer Protection Unit / March 2010		