



[AccessMyLibrary](#) » [Browse](#) » [A](#) » [AZ Daily Star \(Tucson, AZ\)](#) » [SEP-07](#) » [Locksmith scam may have hit Tucson: Existing businesses hear of customers being ripped off.](#)

COPYRIGHT 2007 The Arizona Daily Star

Locksmith scam may have hit Tucson: Existing businesses hear of customers being ripped off.

Publication: AZ Daily Star (Tucson, AZ)

Publication Date: 30-SEP-07

Ads by Google

[Remove Ripoff Report](#) Using Reputation Management We Can Remove Ripoff Report Complaints.

[Reverse Convertibles Scam](#) Sustained losses investing in reverse convertible notes?

[Investment Fraud](#) Recover for Bad Advice and Fraud Investment Fraud Attorneys

[Extended Warranty Scams](#) Is Your Fidelis Warranty Worthless? Call us 24/7 (877) 744-4874

 [Email this article](#) |  [Print this article](#)

COPYRIGHT 2007 The Arizona Daily Star

Byline: Shelley Shelton

Sep. 30--A national trend in shady locksmithing has hit home, leaving Tucson's legitimate locksmiths looking for ways to combat the problem and stay in business.

The trend hits consumers in a particularly vulnerable spot -- the locks that help keep them and their valuables safe.

The new Dex phone book contains several locksmith listings for companies with different names that each have 24 different phone numbers and 10 different addresses. The phone numbers and addresses for each of the businesses are exact duplicates of those listed for the other businesses.

There is no building at the sites of at least four of the 10 addresses listed for A O A Locksmith, which also goes by the names A O1 Locksmith, Absolute Locksmith and several others scattered throughout the white business pages of the phone book.

"It's a very bad business practice. It's giving a lot of us a bad name," said Justin Ashler, an employee of Al's Locksmith and Security Hardware Inc.

Ashler has been working to organize longtime Tucson locksmiths, who met last week to discuss the newcomers. Al's is getting daily reports of people being ripped off, he said.

Such reports include people being overcharged for small jobs and people who pay a 400 percent to 700 percent markup for parts, he said. Shady locksmiths have also been showing up at jobs for which they weren't hired and pretending to be the company that was hired, again overcharging in the process, Ashler said.

Meanwhile, "my phone has pretty much stopped ringing for any weekday calls," so they're definitely hurting business, he said.

The phenomenon apparently is not limited to Tucson. The September issue of Keynotes, a monthly magazine published by the Associated Locksmiths of America, has a two-page

article about it.

"In 2007, we are faced with an epidemic that our industry has not seen before," writes author Jason Gage. "It is the epidemic of the locksmith scammers, aka Locksmith mafia, aka Locksmith Gypsies, aka Fraud smiths, or whatever else your state may categorize them under."

The scammers purchase hundreds of phone numbers in a single local area, often buying the numbers from the main local phone provider through the scammer's own phone companies, Gage writes.

"When these numbers are advertised, it is not uncommon to find a false address and a false business name attached to them. This is done to give the customer a nice warm feeling that they are calling a local company that may be close to them," he writes.

No business licenses

A O A Locksmith, A 01 Locksmith and Absolute Locksmith do not have city of Tucson business licenses. These three companies share addresses and telephone numbers with each other and with several other companies listed in the new phone book.

The companies would definitely need licenses to do business within the city limits, said Beverly Moe, financial services supervisor in the city licensing section.

Even if they provide only a service and don't sell anything for which they would collect sales tax, they would still need a non-tax license, she said.

By contrast, Al's Locksmith, AAA Lock and Key and A&Z Safe Lock and Key -- three of Tucson's established locksmiths with names found in the same part of the phone listings -- all have business licenses.

A O A, A 01 and Absolute are all registered with the Arizona Corporation Commission as "doing business as" names for an organization called Complete Services LLC, based in Tempe.

Daniel Montalvo, who is listed as the company's statutory agent on commission paperwork filed in January 2006, said he's an accountant who set up the corporation and did one year's tax returns for it, but he said he hasn't done anything since then for the company.

A phone book listing yielded a phone number that is not in service for Yigal Lampert, who is listed on corporate paperwork as a corporation member and whose address is the same as the corporate address.

Calls Friday to two phone numbers listed for the Complete Services companies themselves routed into the same call center. One operator said the company management doesn't like to talk to reporters, and the second operator said the managers would be gone all day.

That operator also was unsure what phone number he had answered because the company has many numbers, he said. Neither person gave his name, each saying he just answers the phone.

Wouldn't give full name

Later Friday a man who said he is a manager for Complete Services called but would not give his full name. He said it has nothing to do with the company and that for personal privacy reasons he does not want his name in the paper.

He said the company is based in Phoenix and began servicing the Tucson area about a month ago. When questioned about the nonexistent addresses, he said the addresses are listed only to show callers that the company provides service in those areas and it is not intended for customers to go to the company locations.

He said the company now has one contractor who does the locksmith work and that there were problems with a previous contractor until about two weeks ago, when that person was replaced.

But that story doesn't jibe with what local locksmiths are seeing and hearing.

Jon L. Hoyt, owner of AAA Lock and Key, is feeling particularly victimized because so many of the phone book listings are similar in name to his own company, he said.

And every day, Hoyt said, he gets calls from people who are upset with locksmiths supposedly from his company, but once he gets a vehicle description or license plate

number, he finds that it wasn't one of his people after all.

He's seen a "drastic dip" in service calls in the time since the new phone book was issued, he said.

"There's no scruples and there's no integrity," he said.

The locksmiths who met last week are gathering again this week and hope to arm themselves with enough information to get the Arizona attorney general to investigate, Ashler said.

"All we can do is make as much noise as possible," he said.

picking a reputable locksmith

--Do research before you actually need a locksmith and keep the number handy. If you're locked out in 100-degree heat, you don't want to be shopping around.

--Call and get prices before the job is started. If one place is quite high and another sounds low, call a third to try to determine a going rate.

--Stay away from companies with 20 different phone numbers.

--Don't give your address until you're ready to accept services. Some unscrupulous companies will take your address as soon as you call and dispatch a technician, creating confusion when two locksmiths show up.

--Use a credit card or debit card to pay, and don't sign forms that say you give up your right to dispute charges through the card company.

--Check training or certification. Associated Locksmiths of America offers levels of certification.

--Research the cost of locks and parts. Bogus locksmiths are known to charge 300 percent more than retail.

--Check the company's record with the Better Business Bureau at www.tucson.bbb.org.

Sources: BBB, staff research

--Star reporter Dale Quinn contributed to this report. --Contact reporter Shelley Shelton at 434-4086 or sshelton@azstarnet.com.

To see more of The Arizona Daily Star, or to subscribe to the newspaper, go to <http://www.azstarnet.com>.

Copyright (c) 2007, The Arizona Daily Star, Tucson

Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.

For reprints, email tmsreprints@permissionsgroup.com, call 800-374-7985 or 847-635-6550, send a fax to 847-635-6968, or write to The Permissions Group Inc., 1247 Milwaukee Ave., Suite 303, Glenview, IL 60025, USA.

More Articles from [AZ Daily Star \(Tucson, AZ\)](#)

[Funeral director just a 'farm boy' from Montana.](#)
September 30, 2007

[Agents find body, skeletal remains: Discoveries are made near Douglas,...](#)
September 30, 2007

[The Arizona Daily Star, Tucson, Ernesto Portillo Jr. column: Sinister ...](#)
September 30, 2007

[TUSD's pay deal compares favorably: It places district's starting teac...](#)
September 30, 2007

[The Ravenhearse clan is altogether ooky.](#)
September 30, 2007

© 2008 Gale, a part of Cengage Learning | All Rights Reserved | [About this Service](#) | [About The Gale Group, a part of Cengage Learning](#)
[Privacy Policy](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Content Licensing](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Link to us](#)
Other Gale sites: [Books & Authors](#) | [Goliath](#) | [MovieRetriever.com](#) | [WiseTo Social Issues](#)