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December 12, 2011

\$110,000 consumer settlement reached with Philadelphia area locksmith company accused of posing as "local" business across Pennsylvania



HARRISBURG - Attorney General Linda Kelly announced that the Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer protection has reached a \$110,000 settlement with a Philadelphia area locksmith and home improvement business accused of, among other things, using hundreds of different fictitious business names to mislead consumers across the state into believing they were

dealing with a "local" business, providing inaccurate estimates, and for performing shoddy work.

Kelly said the settlement, known as a Consent Decree, [resolves a lawsuit filed in October 2010](#) against Always In Service, Inc., of 1713 Old York Road, Abington, Montgomery County.

The lawsuit and settlement also involve former company president and owner, Guy Halperin, of Philadelphia; former treasurer and owner, Yuval Attoun, of Newtown; and Refael Mohar, of Philadelphia, who is the current owner and serves as the President, Treasurer and Secretary for the business (Halperin and Attoun divested themselves of their partial ownership of the business in April 2011).

According to the lawsuit, the company used more than a dozen different fictitious business names, advertised in local telephone directories using hundreds of different name headings such as "Pheonixville's Premier Locksmith" and "Pottstown Garage Doors," combined with the use of over 300 different local telephone numbers to make it appear the business was local, and had three websites which also included various false advertisements to offer its locksmith services, along with the installation and repair of security systems, windows, doors and garage doors throughout Pennsylvania.

Kelly said the company was also accused of making numerous false or deceptive claims in their advertisements, such as being accredited by the Better Business Bureau (BBB), the use of "certified master locksmiths," that the business was a "leading service company in many fields," that they were bonded when they were not, and that the business was "family owned and operated."

"These activities, including the bogus business names with the use of local telephone numbers, and exaggerated claims, were allegedly intended to confuse or mislead consumers, leading potential customers to believe that they were dealing with a local business that was highly regarded and well qualified to handle their projects," Kelly said. "The defendants also performed home improvement services, such as installation of doors, windows and garage doors, without registering with the Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer Protection and failed to properly notify consumers about their three-day right to cancel home improvement contracts."

Many consumers also alleged the work performed was shoddy and the final price far exceeded the price they were quoted over the telephone.

Under the terms of the settlement, the business must cease using 13 different fictitious businesses, including:

- Locks ABC
- McDowell & Sons Locksmith
- SOS Master Locksmith
- AAA ASAP All Day & Night Local Emergency Locksmith
- AAA 24/7 Emergency Locksmith
- AAA 24 Hour Local Emergency Locksmith Service
- AAA Locksmith USA
- Locksmith King of Prussia
- Garage Doors
- Gold Garage Doors
- Best Buy Doors and Windows
- A1 Best Locksmith Inc.

The company is also prohibited from making any other deceptive claims about being a "local" business and must include the address of their Abington, Pennsylvania location in all print or Internet advertisements or websites.

Additionally, Kelly said the company is prohibited from making any other misleading or deceptive statements in print, online, orally or on Internet website, including any false claims to be "free estimates," "family owned and operated," "certified master locksmiths," "leading service company in many fields" or "lowest price guarantee."

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Kelly said the settlement also requires significant changes to the company's business practices. Among other things, the defendants are required to ask detailed questions when consumers call for a price quote to formulate a more accurate estimate for services; obtain the consumer's signature of acceptance of work prior to the start of work, which cannot be changed in price or work to be performed unless written consent from the consumer is obtained; disclose to consumers a service charge applies for going out to a consumers home to provide an estimate; honor all advertised discounts or coupons; and include information in all contracts about a consumers three-day right to cancel, under Pennsylvania's Consumer Protection Law, and other rights under the state's Home Improvement Consumer Protection Act.

The Defendants are also required to maintain a separate customer service unit to ensure timely and professional responses to consumer complaints and maintain records relating to each complaint.

The settlement with Always In Service includes \$15,000 in restitution for consumers who have filed valid complaints with the Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer Protection; \$50,000 in civil penalties and \$45,000 to support future public protection and consumer education purposes.

Kelly said that consumers can file complaints by calling the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Hotline at 1-800-441-2555, or by submitting an [online consumer complaint](#).

The lawsuit and consent petition were filed in Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas by Deputy Attorney General Jacqueline M. D'Angelo of the Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer Protection.

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