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### 5 Investigates Locksmith Price Gouging

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**PHOENIX** -- A CBS 5 investigation exposed companies profiting from drivers' bad luck and charging money they shouldn't have to pay.

Jennifer, a 5 Investigates intern, called a locksmith company and said she'd locked her keys inside a 2004 Ford Explorer.

She asked for a quote.

"He'll tell me before he starts doing the job? Well, \$49 is pretty cheap, so that's good to hear," Jennifer said.

That sounded familiar to Leah Echols.

"They price quoted \$55 for opening my car," Echols said.

But when the locksmith arrived and unlocked her car, Echols said she was charged \$125. Pressured and alone, she said, she paid the fee.

"It's bad business, I think," Echols said.

What happened to Echols is happening to consumers across the Valley. They're quoted one price on the phone, but when the locksmith shows up, the price goes up exponentially.

Experts say the reason is that the business has no regulation.

"You have to have a license to go fishing, but there's no license to own tools that can allow me to get into your house," said Patrick McPhilomy, a certified AAA-approved locksmith.

"Not all locksmiths are bad guys. There are definitely some bad guys in the industry, though," McPhilomy said.

Jennifer waited 30 minutes before a man pulled up in a regular unmarked car. It took him two minutes to open the Explorer.

Then he charged her a new price.

"It's 45 plus 25 to open the door," the locksmith said.

"I gave you a good price already. Usually it's around 100," the locksmith told the intern.

When investigative reporter Morgan Loew approached and asked the man about his pricing, he told Loew it was none of his business.

"That's the service charge to show up and there is additional charge to open the car. That's all I can tell you," the locksmith said.

A second company did the same thing, adding \$30 to a \$55 initial quote.

"I'll take it easy on you. It's usually 189," the locksmith told a second intern.

"Eighty-five? I thought the guy said 55," the intern said.

"Fifty-five plus labor," the locksmith said.

Again, Loew approached the locksmith and asked how the pricing worked.

"Ok, if we come out and they've been quoted 55 plus, it's 55 plus labor," the locksmith said.

That locksmith only needed one minute and 15 seconds to open the door.

Loew asked McPhilomy why the locksmiths should charge more than the price they quoted.

"Especially in a vehicle lockout, I can't understand that at all," McPhilomy said.

McPhilomy called it price gouging.

"If the locksmith shows up at your location, the \$59 price quote on the phone has now turned into \$250, the locksmith hasn't even done any work, feel free to tell them to take a hike. They have no business being there," McPhilomy said.

5 Investigates discovered many locksmiths listed in the Valley phone book are actually dispatched out of places like New York City, so there's not much a disgruntled customer can do about their service.

The best advice is to find a trustworthy locksmith now and hold on to the phone number.

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