



NEWS RELEASE

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Consumer Alert: Unlicensed Locksmiths Strike in San Francisco

SACRAMENTO — Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Director Charlene Zettel on Friday warned consumers that a group of unlicensed locksmiths is apparently operating in the San Francisco area.

“It is vital that consumers in the Bay Area take special precautions before hiring a locksmith,” Zettel said, adding that the activities of the group are being probed by DCA’s Bureau of Security and Investigative Services, which licenses locksmiths in California.

Zettel said it isn’t known how long the locksmiths have been operating in California, but BSIS has received at least 16 complaints in recent weeks from consumers in the Bay Area who claim they were subjected to bait-and-switch tactics and shoddy work.

BSIS believes the unlicensed locksmiths are operating under the direction of an East Coast company that is licensed as a locksmith company in California. However, under California law, any satellite office in California would also need its own, separate license.

Because of the ongoing investigation, BSIS is not revealing the name of the East Coast firm, but BSIS believes the firm is operating in California under several names. Those include ***000 Aabay 24 Hour Locksmith***; ***001 24 Hour Locksmith-Day & Night***; ***001 Aabay 24 Hour Locksmith***; ***001 Aabay Locksmith 24 Hour***, and ***1 0 1 24 Hour Locksmith***.

“There may be others out there as well that we don’t know of at this time,” Zettel said.

These companies, all listing different addresses in the Bay Area, can be found in the Web’s version of the San Francisco Yellow Pages. BSIS has no record of them being licensed in California.

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Consumer Alert: Unlicensed Locksmiths Strike in San Francisco

Page 2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2-

California has strict requirements for the licensing of locksmiths. These can be found at www.bsis.ca.gov/forms_pubs/locksmith_fact.shtml.

Zettel said consumers themselves are in the best position to foil unlicensed activity. She offered the following tips for hiring a locksmith:

- 1) Ask family and friends for a referral.
- 2) When you call a locksmith company, ask for its license number. If they cannot provide it or are evasive, take your business elsewhere.
- 3) Verify the license number with DCA, either through the license verification search engine at www.bsis.ca.gov/online_services/verify_license.shtml on the BSIS site; or by calling DCA's Consumer Information Center at (800) 952-5210.
- 4) When the locksmith company employee arrives at your home, ask to see his or her registration. Locksmith employees need to be registered with BSIS.

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