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Nationwide Locksmith Scheme Comes to Las Vegas

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If you've ever locked yourself out of your house or car, it's easy to open the phone book and call for help from a local locksmith. But be careful who you pick. A possible nationwide scam has made its way to Las Vegas.

Consumers are being preyed on by phony locksmiths whose main goal is to rip you off. The problem is, out-of-state companies are working in Nevada under different names and don't have the proper licenses, taking advantage of consumers who aren't getting what they're paying for.



Gene Altobella, president of the Nevada Professional Locksmith Association

They hold the key to your house, your car and a number of things you consider valuable -- but some locksmiths may not be who you think.

Stacey Duran learned that the hard way after locking her keys in her car. She opened the Yellow Pages, called a number listed on a full page ad and was quoted \$55.

"The guy opened my car and I said okay, I owe you \$55 dollars, and he said that was for the service call. The actual labor for opening the car comes to \$195.



Sue Munyon, of Lockshop

Stacey, who doesn't want to show her face for fear of retaliation, says it was the beginning of an intimidating situation. "He basically got in his car, parked in front of my car in the driveway and said he wasn't leaving until I paid him the \$195."

She reluctantly paid -- never asking to see his business license -- and that's the problem.

Gene Altobella, president of the Nevada Professional Locksmith Association says these phony locksmiths prey on your desperate situation. It's a problem that's being investigated in different states throughout the U.S. and there is definite risk.

"The worst danger is that we don't know who these people are. They could be criminals, they could be rapists, they could be sex offenders and there is no way to tell because they have never been checked," said Altobella.

Every locksmith has to be cleared by Metro and get a sheriff's card.

Eyewitness News researched several companies who had full page ads in the phonebook. We were not able to find licenses on many. And when we called them, many refused to give us a license number.

Here's the other problem. In order to have a business license in Clark County, you have to have a physical address. Some of these companies don't.

Sue Munyon, of Lockshop said, "They don't have a store front so it's very difficult to cite someone when there's no place to find them."

Leaving customers like Stacey Duran out money and no where to turn for help. Even though these companies may be licensed out of state, the business name they work under here in Nevada has to be licensed as well.

Of course there are some things you can do to protect yourself. Don't be afraid to ask for a business license, make sure the price they quote you is the worst case scenario

And finally, ask the locksmith to show you his Metro sheriff's card. That way you know they have gone through a background check.

[Email your comments to Reporter Melissa Duran.](#)

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