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Florida-based Locksmith Chain Raided on Wednesday

Published on November 5, 2009 by [Guest Columnist](#) · 5 Comments

CLEARWATER, Fla. – Federal agents stormed the headquarters of Dependable Locks, a national locksmith chain based in Tampa Bay, Fla., on Wednesday, seizing computers and documents, and arresting one of its owners for alleged money laundering.

The raid came days after a WTSP-TV investigation into deceptive sales practices by the locksmith chain.

“This reaches throughout the United States,” said Doug Smith with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the agency to raid the office. “Clearwater... is where a lot of the employees were working, basically in a call center-type scenario.”

Despite hundreds of complaints to dozens of different state agencies, it took a collective effort from the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Missouri Attorney General Office, and Clearwater police to bring the company down because locksmiths are unregulated in 36 states, including Florida.

Investigators arrested one of the owners of Dependable Locks, Moshe Aharoni, charging him with federal mail fraud. An affidavit accuses Aharoni, 28, and fellow owner David Peer, 31, of laundering money through Postal Service money orders. A federal warrant is out for Peer’s arrest.

The affidavit also accuses the owners of instructing their more than 100 employees – many of whom were Israeli nationals in the U.S. without work visas – how to overcharge and deceive customers. The Better Business Bureau gave the company an “F” rating because of hundreds of complaints received over the past two years.

The bust was months in the making, and more arrests are expected. A St. Louis man – Eliyahu Barhanun, 29 – was arrested in a simultaneous sting in Missouri.

“More complaints will come in,” Smith said, “and you’ve got to remember, these are allegations, so there’s more investigating to do.”

U.S. Postal Inspectors have established a hotline for those believing they are victims of locksmiths’ deceptive sales practices. The phone will not be manned, but callers are encouraged to leave their contact information at 1-877-876-2455.



Readers Comments (5)

1.  [John Boatright](#) says:
[November 5, 2009 at 5:28 pm](#)

We and other local locksmiths have been collecting information of the same scams here in Jacksonville FL and would be willing to share the names of the victims if it helps. John Boatright

2.  [Earl Boutell](#) says:
[November 6, 2009 at 12:17 pm](#)

Locksmiths in the Kansas City area are working with TV media and the Missouri AG’s office to eliminate these Scammers. GO Chris Koster and Ron Carrier! Earl Boutell

3.  *Safe&LockCo.* says:
[November 6, 2009 at 3:13 pm](#)

Miami Dade is the only county that requires Locksmiths to be liscened. We have tried to get State Laws changed, There is a Locksmith Law already written but hasn't passed. Call your Mayors, Commissioners, Senators, anyone who holds a public office. Sun-Sentinal and WSVN both did stories a year ago. Your Hairdresser is Licensed, why not the person making your keys?

4.  *Locksmith Charley* says:
[November 7, 2009 at 4:43 am](#)

The headline says "Florida-based Locksmith Chain Raided on Wednesday"

The headline is misleading. Dependable is not a "locksmith chain".

Dependable is a nationwide organization of CRIMINALS masquerading as locksmiths.

Dependable and several other companies have been described from one locksmith to another and among members of the Associated Locksmiths of America as "SCAMMERS" and legitimate locksmiths have been aware of, and to various extents, battling the SCAMMERS for years now.

Other SCAMMER companies are BASAD out of Colorado, ATLAS in Phoenix who is advertising some 250 telephone numbers and 300 phony addresses, COMPLETE in Arizona, as well as several others.

Legitimate locksmiths object to the media labeling SCAMMERS as "Locksmiths" even though the SCAMMERS advertise under our category and pretend to be us.

ALOA is in the process of releasing public service announcements encouraging consumers to understand that more than half of all the ads and listings in the phone books and internet are really SCAMMERS and NOT legitimate locksmiths. My personal estimation is more like 80% SCAMMERS.

If a consumer really wants to protect themselves they should go to ALOA's website "findalocksmith.com" or "Legallocksmiths.com" which is a website operated by Larry who has 20+ years experience as a Phoenix Police detective before moving to Oregon. Consumers are encouraged to find a legitimate locksmith that they can trust ahead of time and lock that person's / company's phone number into their phone ahead of time so they have a point of reference in an emergency.

I tell all of the people that I come into contact with to lock my number into their phone and in the event that I am unable to respond in a timely manner when they call I have at least a half dozen different professional NON-SCAMMER locksmith friends that I can refer calls to. If they call me I can guarantee in the end they won't be ripped off. If the consumer relies on yellow pages, white pages, or the internet, chances are about 80% that they will be victimized by a scammer.

I am Charley@LocksmithCharley.com – 1-800-313-5397 in the Phoenix market.

Thanks for reading and have a GREAT DAY!
Charley

5.  *Gary* says:
[November 9, 2009 at 12:14 pm](#)

MOST important thing, do not trust; 411, Google or the Phone Books if you need a Locksmith. Look at Google 300 to 500 locksmith companies in your home town SCAM. The majority of the phone numbers are forwarded to the scammers. This SCAM is in every State, use ALOA's (Associated Locksmiths of America) web site <http://www.ALOA.org>, <http://www.findalocksmith.com> or

<http://www.legallocksmiths.com>. The next best thing is to find your real local locksmith store before you need a locksmith this is the only way to assure yourself that you are dealing with a real company. Some Locksmiths are mobile service only (no store front) and this makes it harder to know if they are legitimate.

Most locksmith companies have trucks that identify the name of the company. Ask for a business card or State Locksmith License ID card, get drivers license number & tag number of the truck. There are times that the price of the job will increase but a real locksmith will quote that before starting the job.

It is very sad that these people (scammers) are even being called Locksmith, they have only one talent "ripping off consumers" !!!! They do not even have the rights to be called phony locksmiths.

If you have been scammed you must file a complaint with your State attorney office. A lot of States have funds that can be used to refund money to you. They will collect fines & penalties from phony companies to help you. Without the complaints you are aiding the scammers to keep ripping off your friends & neighbor's.

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