

Duct cleaning leads to battery charge

Comments

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When Sandy Nielsen saw a coupon for duct cleaning in the envelope of other coupons she frequently receives in the mail, she figured the offer was legitimate. And it had been more than a year since she got the ducts cleaned in her Oak Forest home. She thought, why not?

But after a physical confrontation with a company salesman in her home resulted in criminal charges against the representative, Nielsen won't be as trusting in the future.

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Sandy Nielsen holds a flier for International Duct Cleaning on Monday at her home in Oak Forest.

(Art Vassy/SouthtownStar)

Oak Forest police on Saturday charged Kfir Dangor, 26, of 5051 Coyle Ave., Skokie, with disorderly conduct and battery after he turned himself in more than a week after the incident.

International Duct Cleaning, based in Skokie, sent two employees to Nielsen's home Sept. 24 for what was to be a simple duct cleaning - just as the coupon advertised, Nielsen told police.

But not long after they began the work, a technician who said his name was Mike - but whom police later said was Dangor - started making an aggressive pitch for a more involved cleaning, one that would cost quite a bit more.

Nielsen said she found it odd her ducts could be as dirty as Dangor said since she just had them cleaned about a year previously. But she said Dangor pushed the sale hard.

When Nielsen said she couldn't afford more than the basic service, Dangor told her if she didn't get what he recommended done, she was being a bad mother and it would cause her two young sons to get sick. At that point, Nielsen told Dangor and his colleague to leave, but he refused, saying they were there to finish the work.

Bedroom confrontation

Nielsen said she took her 4-year old son, who was crying because of the confrontation, into her upstairs bedroom and called the company to report Dangor.

While she was on the phone with the receptionist, Nielsen said Dangor barged into her bedroom, put his hand on her shoulder and forcibly turned her around and shouted, "What is your problem?"

Nielsen said she screamed at Dangor several times to get out of her house.

He eventually left the bedroom. But when she went back downstairs, he was standing with a bill for \$150 and demanded to be paid for the work done.

"I wasn't going to argue anymore with him. I was very frightened and just paid him to get him out of my house," she said.

The company's owner, Assaf Ben Hamu, called her a couple of hours after the incident and told her that Dangor was a good employee and he had a difficult time believing he was capable of what she said he did. So Nielsen called police.

A police report stated Hamu was uncooperative with them and that they told him Dangor needed to come to the station to clear the matter up, after which he turned himself in.

Reached by telephone Monday, Hamu told the SouthtownStar he had resolved the matter and refused to answer any further questions before hanging up.

History of complaints

According to the Illinois secretary of state Web site, the company was incorporated in January 2009 and the address Dangor gave police is the same address listed for the business.

The Better Business Bureau has given the company an F rating, its worst, since opening a file on the company in March 2009.

According to the bureau's Web site, 33 complaints have been filed against the company, including 17 of which the business failed to respond to, four it responded to but failed to resolve, and one serious complaint.

The bureau said the company's complaint history includes "a pattern of allegations that it uses high-pressure sales tactics, poor quality of work and does not honor advertised prices by adding additional products and services that are either unauthorized or unnecessary."

After the ordeal, Nielsen said she will take several steps before inviting another company to her home to do any kind of work.

"I'm going to check out a business before I invited them to my home. Whether it's the Better Business Bureau or something like angleslist.com. And I'm going to make sure it's when my husband is home," she said.