

# Protect Your Door

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## Traveling Magazine Sales Groups - Strategies to Protect You and Your Home

If you are busy, and don't think you have time to read anything, read this anyway...

*If an unknown / suspicious person, or anyone without a purple identification tag from the Sylvania Township Administration offices attempts to sell you a magazine subscription (or anything else):*

**Do Not Open The Door, And Call The Police Immediately!**

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### Overview

All door-to-door Transient Vendors and Charitable Solicitors working within Sylvania Township must be registered and have a permit on file with Sylvania Township. They must carry the Sylvania Township Transient Vendor's Permit with them at all times. See Resolution No. 13-055

<http://agenda.sylvaniatownship.com/sirepub/cache/2/0jnitkmfkmfngemu3mt01ia/1624608262013082816872.PDF>

Every year, "on-the-job training" and "business development companies" seek out independent contractors who recruit sales agents, usually disadvantaged citizens aging from teen to adult who will go door-to-door to sell magazine subscriptions. Frequently these traveling magazine sales crews are part of a consumer fraud that is not only occurring in Sylvania Township but throughout the nation. Reports of fraudulent door-to-door magazine sales continue to increase each year. These independent contractors claim, beyond sustaining their own for-profit business and growing their recruitment base, that proceeds help disadvantaged young citizens by equipping them with the tools to change their lives for the better.

Overall, door-to-door magazine sales have proven, repeatedly, to be a huge scam on everyone from the disadvantage young sales agents to the unsuspecting customer. This fraud works in several ways. The organizations that perpetrate this fraud are not only trying to defraud consumers, but defraud their sales agents as well. These organizations are not concerned about their agent's safety or, for that matter, the safety of anyone. The only thing these organizations care about is how much money they can get out of you.

These door-to-door magazine sales organizations hire a variety of people. Young teens needing work for the summer, young adults wanting to travel, older adults looking to start a new life, criminals on the run, and convicted criminals hoping to fly under the radar are their targets. These organizations put everyone together on a sales team, whisk them away to another state, place them in a hotel with 4 or more people in a room, drop them off in an unfamiliar neighborhood, and entice them to sell magazines.

The door-to-door magazine organizations promise easy money. "Make great cash and we pay you for it!" "Travel the country on our dime and make money doing it!" "Sell magazines for us and win a trip or \$5,000 dollars." To an unfortunate teenager, it sounds like easy money for the summer; to a young adult, easy money and sales experience; to a criminal, easy access to a variety of unsuspecting victims who kindly open their doors to them.

### **How the fraudulent door-to-door magazines sales works.**

#### *The sales agent:*

The sales agents are left on their own to roam through neighborhoods. The theft begins when they sell you a magazine subscription that you may never receive, or when the designated charity never sees your donation. Possibly, you may give a cash donation just to get rid of the sales person. Perhaps you fear that criminal damage will occur to your property if you do not give something. Giving a check will not save you. Your routing and bank account numbers are on the check. All the agent needs to do is record those numbers, along with all other information on the check, such as your name, address, phone number, and sadly, maybe even your driver's license number. Now they have your checking information and can transfer money out of your account. Same thing with giving a credit card number. All they need to do is write down the credit card number and use it later.

These sale agents are encouraged to lie to the potential customer about their commission. They are told to say they are in a contest and are trying to win an educational vacation abroad, trying to win a scholarship, trying to win points, or selling magazines for charity. The organization's contractors tell their agents not to give the organization's full name, but only give the initials, or to give the name of another well-known magazine door-to-door sales company. Of course, not giving the company's full, correct name makes it even harder to try to get that cancellation through. So, their sales pitch is based on a lie that they are trained to deliver, only leading to the obvious: *everything about the magazine sale is a lie.*

The agents are trained to work on your emotions and guilt. They may talk to you about how they can become successful like you, or how they can better themselves, how good looking or fit you are, or suggest that if you do not have the money, the magazine company will bill you later. These sale agents may be high-pressure sales persons who will not take "No" for an answer.

### *The Magazine Sales Company:*

The magazine sales companies themselves, if even legitimate, do things such as provide a very limited amount of time to cancel the subscription, and may not put their contact information on the receipt. If you actually get their contact information, you now go round- for- round with an unchecked voice mailbox or answering machine. Chances of speaking to a human to cancel your subscription are slim to none without legal action. Further, these subscription rates are priced over market value, or are "too good to be true".

If you happen to find a website run by this door-to-door magazine sales company, chances are that they have a disclaimer noting that they will not honor anything their own sales agent told you. This means, if the sales agent told you that you could cancel the subscription later or that they would not cash your check until the subscription starts, the company will not abide by that contract.

The length of time it takes the subscription to start can be up to 3 months after they have taken your money. In addition, if you opted to pay in installments, you are being charged for those installment payments and you have not yet received one magazine. This is assuming you will actually receive the subscription that you believe you bought. The chance of receiving your subscription is unlikely.

### **Tips to avoid fraudulent door-to-door sales**

1. The best way to avoid door-to-door frauds: **DON'T ANSWER THE DOOR.** If you are not expecting anyone, ask who it is through the closed door. If it is a door-to-door sales person, tell them to leave. If they do not leave, or give you any problems, call the police.
2. Putting a "No Solicitors" sign is a viable option. Homeowners within the Township may request a "No Solicitation" decal or sticker, which may be affixed near the front door of their residence. All Transient Vendors and Charitable Solicitors have been informed that attempted sales or solicitations of persons whose homes have a "No Solicitation" decal or sticker is subject to revocation of their permit. If this occurs, call the police.
3. If you do answer the door, **Do Not Open It Wide and Do Not Invite Them In.** Even if they say "Can I use your phone to contact my sales manager", "Can I get a glass of water?", "May I use your bathroom?" or "It's really hot out here - may we come inside and talk where it's cool?" Once inside, this stranger can steal from you, or even harm you.
4. If you have opened the door and this person will not leave or tries to stick his foot in the door, scream. Yell at him; yell "Fire!" or anything that will get someone's attention.
5. If you live in an apartment complex with a security door, remember: do not buzz in someone you do not know. Use the intercom to find out who it is. Door-to-Door sales people are known for buzzing everyone in the building to see if anyone will let them in without checking to see who it is.
6. If you see a neighbor being harassed by a door-to-door sales person, call the police. If you feel comfortable enough, walk up to your neighbor and ask what is going on.
7. If you do talk to a door-to- door sales person and do not feel comfortable, call the police. Chances are they do not have a solicitors permit and are breaking the law by just knocking on your door. Also, notify your neighbors, and do not be afraid to watch where the door-to-door sales person goes after leaving. If you notice that they are going to houses that do not appear to have anyone home,

call the police. They could be trying to break in. In addition, be more alert. It is common for a neighborhood to experience a rash of home burglaries, car break-ins, or garage break-ins days after a team of traveling sales people have visited the neighborhood, especially if they did not get the sales they were expecting.

8. If you do call the police, give a good description of the sales person(s), including any identifying marks, tattoos, scars, hair color, height, weight, type of clothes they were wearing, any accents, and whether they are male or female. Note which direction they are heading.

### **Tips for people who have given money to a fraudulent organization**

1. If you gave a check, cancel the check immediately, and then try to call and cancel the subscription. This may be difficult, but at least make the attempt and keep a record of it. It would be best to close your checking account because the company and sales person now have your routing and account numbers. They can be used to transfer money out of your account, even if you cancel the check.
2. If you provided a credit card number, call your credit card company tell them what happened, and give them whatever information you have. Also, cancel the card. Monitor the charges that appear on your account.
3. After you have canceled the check or credit card transaction, and if you happen to have the company's address, send a cancellation letter with a copy of your receipt to the company. Send it certified mail and request a signature upon receipt. Even if it comes back as unsigned, it is proof you attempted to cancel within the cancellation period.
4. Go to the Better Business Bureaus website and lodge a complaint against the company. [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org).
5. If you receive communication from the magazine sales company demanding payment after you have canceled, send them a "cease and desist letter" along with copies of your cancellation letter and the certified mail receipt with delivery proof. Do not send them originals. Always send copies. If you continue to be harassed, threaten legal action against them.