

# Door-to-Door Sales of Energy Related Products and Services

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A number of instances have recently occurred in Alberta where energy related salespeople are approaching consumers' homes and misrepresenting themselves as a member of the Government of Alberta. This scam is carried out door-to-door and usually starts with the salesperson asking to perform an inspection of the home's HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) systems. They commonly question the safety, condition, replacement needs of HVAC components such as the furnace, water heater and air conditioner.

Effective January 1, 2017, the Government of Alberta banned door-to-door sales of furnaces and related products and services including water heaters, air conditioners, windows, energy contracts and energy audits.

Salespeople also approach homeowners under the guise of a carbon levy. They will commonly expose and prey on the homeowner's lack of knowledge of HVAC systems. There are a number of red flags in this scam.

## Red flags

- The salesperson misrepresents or implies they are from the Government of Alberta.
- The salesperson says they are inspecting the furnace venting for safety purposes or are part of a government sanctioned upgrade program.
- A sense of urgency that there is an immediate safety concern is created. Fears about safety are used to help persuade an owner to purchase or rent a furnace.
- They ask to see a utility bill and inform the renter/owner they may qualify for an upgrade program.
- The person implies there is a government rebate for changing your furnace.
- They may misrepresent that neighbours had the same problem and purchased products from them.
- The sales agents are extremely persistent and may keep pushing even if you refuse to buy.
- The person tries to sell you an overpriced furnace. For example, a \$900 furnace for \$10,000+.

## Consumer protection information

- The government does not send furnace inspectors to homes.
- The carbon levy does not apply to any feature of your furnace (energy efficiency, code compliance or safety). The scam attempts to link a carbon levy to the efficiency of your furnace. These two issues are not linked.
- Government rebates for furnace replacement do not exist in Alberta.

## Useful links

- <http://www.scam-detector.com/> lists similar scams to this one and how it works.
- <http://www.scam-detector.com/face-to-face-scams/phony-gas-inspectors>
- <http://www.scam-detector.com/face-to-face-scams/heating-and-air-conditioning-repairs-service>

## Protect yourself before you buy or sign a direct sales contract

- Have you asked for identification?
- Are you being pressured into buying?
- Are you getting quality for your money?
- Have you shopped around and obtained estimates from other suppliers?
- Have you read and understood the contract?
- Are you familiar with the company's reputation?
- Does the company have a permanent office you can call if you have problems?
- Will the company provide maintenance and repair services?
- Is the business named in the contract the same firm you have been dealing with?

## How to file a consumer complaint?

- If you have purchased an energy related product or service (furnace, water heater, air conditioner, windows, energy contract and energy audit) through a door-to-door salesperson on or after January 1, 2017, you can file a consumer complaint at <https://www.alberta.ca/file-consumer-complaint.aspx>
- Choose “direct selling” under the complaint category when filling out the Online Consumer Complaint Form: <https://www.alberta.ca/file-consumer-complaint.aspx>.

## For more information

For more information about door-to-door (direct) sales, see the Service Alberta tipsheet “Dealing with Door-to-Door Sales”:  
<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/dealing-with-door-to-door-sales> or contact:

## Consumer Contact Centre

In Edmonton: 780-427-4088  
Toll-free in Alberta: 1-877-427-4088  
<https://www.alberta.ca/service-alberta.aspx>