TOMS RIVER LOCKSMITH
732-240-7350

**IS YOUR LOCKSMITH "LOCAL"?**
**Beware being scammed!**
*By Jim Everett*

**www.TRLock.com**

Born and raised in Toms River, I have no problem saying that I am a "local locksmith." I have a "local" locksmith name and "local" phone numbers. So this alone should prove that I am, in fact, a "local locksmith business," correct?

*Not so*. There has been a recent phony-locksmith scam in which fraudulent locksmiths appear to be "local" by virtue of their "local" phone numbers and addresses. In reality, the address is fictitious and the phone number actually rings to an out-of-state answering service.

These companies then send unlicensed locksmiths to your location and charge you exorbitant prices. This problem has been featured on *Good Morning America* as well as newspapers. It has also been pursued by the Associated Locksmiths of America.

Unfortunately, the issue is magnified when advertising books distributed to our homes take money for ads, without verifying the information that could protect consumers.

If you or someone you know is in need of locksmith, there are things you can do to protect yourself:

1) Locksmiths in New Jersey are required to be licensed and are issued an ID card with a photo and their license number affixed. Ask to see your locksmith's ID card *before* you let him start any work.

2) Many of these bogus companies operate under numerous names. As a result, they answer the phone "locksmith" without giving the specific company name. Be sure to ask, "What is the legal name of your company?"

3) The Associated Locksmiths of America (ALOA) allows members to post the ALOA logo in their advertisements and on their Web sites. However, some of these fraudulent companies will use this logo without authorization. To check on a company and its membership status, call 800-532-2562 or visit www.findalocksmith.com.

4) Locksmith service vehicles should have lettering with their company name on it. They are also required by New Jersey law to have their NJ locksmith license number on the vehicle. Many of these phony companies will respond with vehicles that have no lettering on them. Beware of these unmarked service vehicles.

5) Check the advertisement and see if it matches the company name given. See if the small print under the ad matches the same name given in the ad itself. If you are looking at a Web site, does the site name match the name on the advertisement?

6) Ask for an estimate before work is started. Most locksmiths can give an estimate over the phone for basic services. Never sign a blank or unfinished invoice. Always get an invoice when the work is complete, stating what services where provided. The invoice should have the company name and address on it.

7) *Refuse* to have the work done if you are not comfortable with the service provider. You can and should refuse work if you suspect fraudulent and/or deceptive business practices. Call the police if you believe there will be a problem.

8) Ask around, as a personal referral from a friend or relative will be a good benchmark for a reputable local locksmith.

9) Pick a locksmith *before* you need one. Take the time to investigate companies and ensure that you and your property are secured through a professional and legitimate "local" locksmith.

10) If you are happy with your locksmith, please tell a friend. If you feel you have been a victim of a fraudulent or phony locksmith scheme, file a complaint with the NJ Division of Consumer Affairs, NJ Office of the Attorney General, Ocean County Consumer Affairs, Better Business Bureau, Local Police and/or the Ocean County Prosecutor's Office.

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