



California State Fire Marshal Information Bulletin

January 12, 2009

STATEWIDE CONSUMER ALERT REGARDING FIRE PROTECTION EQUIPMENT SCAM

This Information Bulletin is to make the public aware that the Tulare County Fire Department is working with the Tulare County District Attorney's Office, Contractor State Licensing Board (CSLB) and the State Fire Marshal (SFM) in warning consumers and businesses across California that representatives of "American Fire Protection" (CSLB License #726110 and SFM License # 1761) have been using high-pressure sales tactics and deceptive methods to convince business to purchase their services.

Anyone who has contracted or has done business with, or work done by American Fire Protection is urged to either contact the Tulare County Fire Department Fire Prevention Division at (559) 747-8233, or the Tulare County District Attorney's Office at (559) 624-1054.

Please see the attached Consumer Alerts issued by the CSLB and Public Safety Announcement issued by the Tulare County Fire Department for more information.

For information regarding the California State Fire Marshal Office please visit our website <http://osfm.fire.ca.gov>



TULARE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

907 West Visalia Road, Farmersville, CA 93223 - Phone (559) 747-8233

STEVE SUNDERLAND
CHIEF

Public Safety Announcement

Agency contact – Joe Garcia (559) 967-8486

Beware when getting fire extinguishers, kitchen hood & duct systems or fire sprinkler systems serviced

Business owners need to be alert to anyone coming to their offices, stores or restaurants to service their fire extinguishers, or to perform service on the hood and duct systems over the cooking areas, or conducting service to automatic sprinkler system. There have been reports in various areas of Tulare and Fresno, Madera & Mariposa Counties, that representatives of American Fire Protection have been using high-pressure sales tactics and other methods to convince the business owner to buy their services.

Representatives of American Fire Protection:

- Wear uniforms with patches similar to those worn by fire department staff and give the impression that they are from the fire department.
- Claim that they are fire marshals and are authorized to close the business if not allowed to do an inspection of their fire protection systems and make subsequent repairs.
- Claim they are there to service the fire extinguishers or hood & duct systems prior to the service date of the devices.
- Claim they are there to provide service on extinguishers or hood duct systems that have previously been serviced by another company.
- In many cases will do substandard and non-code compliant work when hired by the business owner.

The Tulare County Fire Department does not endorse, recommend or send any fire extinguishing or fire protection service companies to a local business. It is up to the business owner to seek those services when needed. There are several reputable companies in the area that are listed in the Yellow Pages and provide those services. Get bids from reputable companies and choose the one you want. Be sure that the service person has proper identification and is from the company that you selected. Do not permit a service company to provide service that you did not request or that is not required.

Fire extinguishers are required to have a maintenance inspection conducted annually. Kitchen hood and duct systems are required to be serviced every six months. Fire sprinkler systems are required to be serviced every five years.

If you have done business with, or had work done by American Fire Protection, contact the Tulare County Fire Department Fire Prevention Division at (559) 747-8233. If you are located within city limits, contact your local fire department.

We want your business to be safe for your employees and customers. Fire protection systems and fire extinguishers that are properly installed and serviced can save lives and protect property.



Tulare County Fire Department Citizen Complaint Form

1. Who:

- Name of complainant: _____
- Address: _____
- City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
- Telephone Number _____ Cell Number _____

2. What: *Subject of complaint. Briefly state the nature of complaint and the action of the person(s) that you believe was illegal or improper. Use additional sheets if necessary.*

3. When: Date(s) of Incident. _____

4. Where: _____

5. Why/How: *Attach pertinent documents and correspondence with dates.*

6. Other persons or agencies you have contacted about this problem:

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Consumer Alert

Serving
California

CONTRACTORS STATE LICENSE BOARD

9821 Business Park Drive, Sacramento, California 95827
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 26000, Sacramento, CA 95826

Look for the license!

800-321-CSLB
www.cslb.ca.gov



CONTACT: Rick Lopes, CSLB 916-255-4161
Venus Stromberg, CSLB 916-255-1831
Joe Garcia, Tulare County 559-967-8486
Fire Dept.

DATE: December 23, 2008
CSLB #: 08-34

Contractors State License Board Issues Statewide Consumer Alert Regarding Fire Protection Equipment Scam

Investigators believe consumers and businesses are victims of maintenance and installation company

SACRAMENTO – The Contractors State License Board (CSLB) is joining the Tulare County Fire Department and Tulare County District Attorney's Office in warning consumers and businesses across California to be on alert for anyone coming to their



offices, stores or restaurants to service their fire extinguishers, to perform service on the hood and duct systems over cooking areas, or to conduct maintenance on automatic sprinkler systems.

Investigators believe that representatives of "American Fire Protection" (CSLB License #726110) have been using high-pressure sales tactics and deceptive methods to convince business owners to buy their service. These methods include:

- Wearing uniforms with patches similar to those worn by fire department staff, giving the impression that they are from the fire department.
- Claiming they are fire marshals and authorized to close the business if not allowed to do an inspection of the fire protection systems and make subsequent repairs.
- Claiming they are there to service fire extinguishers or hood and duct systems prior to the date those devices are to be serviced.
- Claiming they are at a business to provide service on extinguishers or hood duct systems that have previously been serviced by another company.

In many cases, when hired by the business owner, they will do sub-standard work without proper building code inspections. Investigators believe that American Fire Protection, which is based in Camarillo (Ventura County), operates throughout California, from the San Francisco Bay Area to Sacramento in the north, through the central valley counties of Tulare, Kings, Fresno, Madera, Merced and Mariposa, the San Luis Obispo coastal area and into Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange and other Southern California regions.

Contractors State License Board Issues Consumer Alert Regarding Fire Protection Equipment Scam 2-2-2-2-2

A Tulare County Superior Court judge has granted a temporary restraining order, restricting company Chief Executive Officer Danny Victor Williams, Anthony David Ash and Ken Gordon Speck from:

- Impersonating governmental fire protection officials to gain admission to places of business; falsely representing that they have serviced fire protection equipment and placing inspection tags on equipment that has not been properly inspected and serviced; and
- Making untrue and misleading statements in connection with the sale or attempted sale of fire equipment contracting services.

The Tulare County District Attorney's Office is also seeking a Preliminary Injunction, as part of a civil suit filed to stop the company from engaging in "unlawful business practices," under Business and Professions Code 17200 and 17500.

"We're extremely concerned for anyone who's been pressured into using this company's services over the past four years," said CSLB Registrar Steve Sands. "Their shoddy work has put human lives in danger, and the likelihood that property will be destroyed should fire break out."

Anyone who has contracted with "American Fire Protection" is urged to either contact the Tulare County Fire Department Fire Prevention Division at (559) 747-8233, or the Tulare County District Attorney's Office at (559) 624-1054.

The Contractors State License Board operates under the umbrella of the California Department of Consumer Affairs. The CSLB licenses and regulates California's 316,000 contractors, and investigates more than 20,000 complaints against contractors annually. In fiscal year 2007-08, the CSLB helped consumers get \$35.2 million in ordered restitution.

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Contractors State License Board Issues Consumer Alert Regarding Fire Protection Equipment Scam 3-3-3-3

Photo Samples from American Fire Protection



Inspection Tags Used by American Fire Protection



Patches on American Fire Protection Uniforms



American Fire Protection Uniforms



American Fire Protection Uniform



City of Visalia Firefighter in Uniform

