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For information or to schedule a presentation about fraud related issues and prevention Contact:

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Consumer Advisory

Furnace Inspection Imposters Blow Hot Air

As the nights get cooler and thoughts turn to winterizing the home, con artists who pose as furnace inspectors start making an appearance. Dressed as utility company or city employees, they will often use scare tactics such as concerns about gas build-up, or fears about high carbon monoxide levels as a ploy to get inside your house. There are a variety of frauds and thefts associated with these scams. Thieves may be trying to get inside to steal valuables such as jewelry or cash. Others conduct bogus tests, and then charge a fee for their service. The most costly scam involves those who fabricate a furnace problem, and then offer to fix or replace it, leaving you out money and a damaged furnace that will require further repair.

Sometimes energy companies must enter homes to read old meters and to inspect newly installed furnaces and water heaters. Legitimate companies or city employees will have well marked vehicles and clothing, as well as identification. Take the time to call the company they say they represent to verify before letting them in.

Having your furnace periodically inspected is a good idea, but should be an action that you initiate. Reputable energy companies will usually conduct these inspections for residents. In the City of Denver, furnace contractors must be licensed in order to get a permit.

To verify if a contractor is licensed, contact the Denver Building Department at 720-865-2770 or go online <http://www.denvergov.org/ContractorLicenseSearch/tabid/435239/Default.aspx> or call the Better Business Bureau at 303-758-2100.

- Before letting them in, always verify that inspectors are who they say they are.
- Always get a second opinion from a different licensed contractor. And, make sure to investigate *that* contractor with the Better Business Bureau as well.
- If you get a phone call from a heating contractor who claims you may have done business with them, remember their client list may have been sold to another owner or taken by an employee who no longer works there.
- Keep in mind, once the old furnace has been removed it is impossible to prove its' prior condition. At that point, little can be done by any agency or in court to remedy your situation.

For more information on winter safety tips, click on:

<https://www.xcelenergy.com/Safety & Education/At Home & Work/Other Safety/Winter Energy Safety Tips>

Denver DA's Fraud Line: 720-913-9179

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