

Buyers beware

Fire department urges consumers to make sure safety products work

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

"If you've purchased any fire protection products — particularly those sold door-to-door — the Farmington Hills Fire Department wants you to call to be sure that the items you've purchased work as advertised."

Fire officials have received some calls from residents who purchased products such as smoke detectors, halon fire extinguishers and flame retardant solutions from a company named Safety Plus Inc.

In mid-August, state Attorney General Frank Kelley ordered the company, based in Lexington, Ky., to stop selling its products. The week before the Federal Trade Commission won a temporary restraining order against the company, requiring that the firm stop allegedly deceptive employment practices.

According to Kelley, the products sold door-to-door by the company fall short of the promises made by the company.

The Observer could not reach officials of the company in Kentucky.

BUT FIRE officials' concern is that residents be sure the products they have purchased — whether from Safety Plus or other door-to-door sales people — work as advertised.

Lt. Mike Garr of the Farmington Hills Fire Department said he received a call from a woman who purchased a halon extinguisher, which is primarily used to put out

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— Lt. Mike Garr

gas fires such as in a kitchen. The sales person, however, told the woman to keep a halon extinguisher in her bedroom.

"I can't imagine why you'd want one in your bedroom," said Garr, who also has attempted to contact Safety Plus officials at a Livonia office.

Garr also is concerned about residents who may have bought a flame retardant spray. Sales people reportedly have sold the product on the basis that it can prevent fire. For example, buyers have been told they could spray the retardant from their bed to the front door of their house so they could safely get out in case of fire, Garr said.

The Farmington Hills Fire Department does not endorse products. And Garr cautions residents: "If it (the product) sounds too good to be true, there's probably something wrong with it."

Another example Garr gave was of residents who have bought escape ladders from the door-to-door sales people for \$95. A good escape ladder can be purchased at a hardware

store for \$35, he said.

GARR SAID he's received a "handful of complaints. But I'm concerned it's just the tip of the iceberg. People seem to be more vulnerable (to sales people) when they are in their homes," he said.

Residents and potential buyers should be sure to check that any fire safety products they buy bear the Underwriters Laboratory insignia or the one from Factory Mutual. That means the products have been tested and have passed standards required by the laboratories.

Garr suggests that anyone who has purchased fire safety products from door-to-door sales people or from anyone else and want them checked to be sure they work and are appropriate should call the fire department fire prevention section at 555-0744.

"We certainly will respond," Garr said.

The fire department also will conduct free safety inspections and continues to offer its smoke detector program.



They're in charge

New officers for the Interagency Council of Farmington/Hillman Hills are (from left) Pat Isham, secretary; Suzanne Paul, past president; Paul Barber, treasurer; Sandy Baumann, president; and Pamela O'Malley, vice president.

The Interagency Council is a group of non-profit and service agencies whose purpose is to share information on current projects and encourage cooperation among the agencies.

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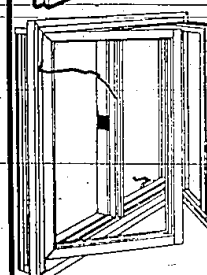
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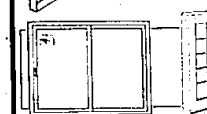
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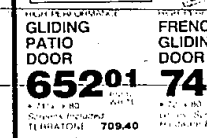
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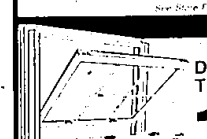
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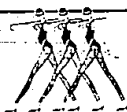
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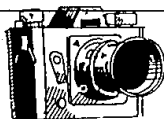
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