

Watch for scam artists this spring

As the Michigan weather gets warmer and the asphalt paving season begins, consumers are warned to be extremely cautious when selecting a contractor to pave a driveway or parking lot.

Each spring, bands of scam artists try to scam unsuspecting homeowners and business people.

Their favorite targets are senior citizens. Some of the asphalt paving scams warning signs are:

■ **Selling door-to-door.** Reputable asphalt contractors will rarely, if ever, sell their product door-to-door.

■ **Claiming they have left over asphalt from another job.** Professional asphalt contractors will know, with great accuracy, how much paving material is needed to complete a project. Rarely will they have left-over material.

■ **Push you to make a quick decision.** Reputable contractors will provide a written estimate that will be valid for days or weeks. If the great deal they are offering you today is not available tomorrow or next week, it is probably a scam. Never hire someone on the spot. Ask for references, then check them.

■ **No contract offered.** Insist on a written contract specifying in detail, the work to be performed and the agreed upon price.

■ **Cash only sales.** Most reputable contractors take checks or credit cards and don't require cash-only terms. ■ **Deals that seem to be good to be true.** If the quoted price seems very low, chances are the quality of the work will also be quite low.

■ **Unmarked truck.** Often the trucks they travel in are unmarked or they have an out-of-town address and phone number. A little research will reveal that they have no permanent address and the phone number is often an answering machine.

A professionally designed and properly constructed asphalt pavement will last for many years and most reputable contractors will stand behind their work.

Know who you are doing business with. Consumers are safer dealing with a contractor who has roots in the community.

For a brief overview of asphalt paving and some helpful information regarding working with asphalt contractors, call Michigan Asphalt Paving Association at 1-800-292-6959 and request the free driveway brochure. The Michigan Asphalt Paving Association seeks to inform policymakers and the public of the advantages of using asphalt in road-building applications. To learn more about MAPA and The New Asphalt, visit our web site at www.miasphalt.com.

My mornings are hectic. Everyone needs my help. This interrupts what I want to do. I walk in circles



Domestic Planner

Diana Koenig

■ **The first hour of the day will determine how productive you will be.** It sets the stage for your day. It is important to begin each day with an efficient plan. The first hour schedule may vary because of vacations, school year, summer, week-ends or weekdays. Part of the success of the first hour is determined by the last hour the night before. You cannot leave a sink full of dishes,

stacks of paper and general clutter throughout your house if you expect the next morning to run smoothly.

This might be your typical "first hour" day: The alarm rings and you get out of bed. You tend to personal needs and make the bed. Start a load of clothes in the washer. Proceed to the kitchen where you can prepare breakfast, eat and fix lunch. After everyone has had breakfast do a final kitchen clean-up.

Spouses and older children can be trained to clean their own breakfast dishes and if necessary make their own lunches.

Put the clothes from the washer into the dryer. Next freshen up the bathrooms and empty all the trash cans. Finally finish any necessary personal needs. You are ready for the rest of the day. Whether

you leave or stay home, your house is in order.

If you have a specific "cleaning house" day, you will have a different agenda for that day. You will not have to freshen the bathrooms because you are going to thoroughly clean them. You will not make beds during your first hour because you will wash bed linens before making the beds. In the summer months when the children are not in school you may begin the morning later with a more relaxed schedule.

Train your family to be responsible when they get ready in the morning. Each family member can make his bed, pick up his room and rinse his own breakfast dishes. Older children can make their own breakfast (except on mornings when Mom prepares breakfast for everyone) and school lunches. You can train

your children as early as age six to make their beds. They can make their own school lunches at age 10.

The early training you give your children in these basics will prepare them for their future careers.

Your days will be more productive if you follow a first hour schedule. You can accomplish a lot in the first hour, and that will help you establish a routine for the rest of the day. If the schedule for the rest of the day crashes, at least your first hour was a success.

Today's Refrigerator Bulletin: "The success of each day depends on the first 60 minutes!"

Send your questions and success stories to: Diana Koenig, P.O. Box 1702, Manchester, MO 63071 e-mail: dianakoenig@hotmail.com or www.domesticplanner.com

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