



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 4, 2013

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Dan Tierney: 614-466-3840

Mark Moretti: 614-466-3840

2012 Top 10 Consumer Complaints

In 2012, the Ohio Attorney General's Consumer Protection Section received more than 30,500 complaints.

The top 10 complaint categories were:

1. Motorized Vehicles

- 5,299 total complaints*
- Used car sales were the most common type of motor vehicle complaint. Consumers commonly complain they do not receive the title to a car they purchased.
- Other common complaints involve vehicle repairs and new vehicle sales.
- Consumer tip: You do not have an automatic three-day right to cancel the purchase of a vehicle. For most motor vehicle sales, once you buy the car, it's yours.

2. Collections, Credit Reporting or Financial Services

- 4,845 total complaints*
- About 60% of all complaints in this category are collections complaints. Consumers often report receiving collections calls for debts they do not owe.
- Other complaints in this category involve payday lending/short-term loans, advanced fee loans/credit cards, and credit reporting.

3. Do Not Call Violations

- 3,619 complaints*

- “Do Not Call” became its own complaint category in 2012 due to the high number of consumers that reported receiving unsolicited phone calls in violation of the Do Not Call laws.
- Many of these calls are “robocalls” from card member services, or similar entities. These calls are very easy for scammers to place and very difficult for authorities to track.
- Unfortunately, it’s very difficult to stop illegal robocalls, but consumers can protect themselves by not responding to the calls in any way. They should not provide their personal information and they should not follow any prompts, even to “unsubscribe” from the calls. (By trying to “unsubscribe,” they may be telling the scammers that theirs is an active phone number.)

4. Household Goods or Property Improvement

- 2,483 total complaints*
- This category involves a wide variety of complaints. Top subcategories are windows/doors, roofing, mixed property services, and large appliances.
- In one case, consumers filed more than 200 complaints against Regency Windows, a Northeast Ohio window replacement business, after the business shut down in January 2012. The AGO filed a lawsuit against Regency in June 2012.
- In another case, a Cleveland-area home builder, Unmistakably Premier Homes, generated about 30 complaints in 2012 after running into financial problems. Consumers said they paid substantial deposits for new homes that were not completed and that they did not receive refunds. The AGO filed a lawsuit in November 2012 for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act.

5. Internet, Phone, or TV Services

- 2,464 complaints*
- About one-third of complaints in this category involved wireless service (787 complaints). Other complaints involved satellite network, cable TV, and cable bundling.
- In their complaints, consumers cited billing issues as the most common problem area. Other common problem areas were misrepresentation, cancellation rights, and poor service/shoddy work.

6. Professional Services

- 1,973 complaints*
- This category includes a variety of miscellaneous complaints, including tax services, cemetery/funeral services, and home security system services.
- Within this category, Floral Hills Memorial Gardens (cemeteries in Chillicothe and Circleville) generated more than 100 complaints in 2012. The AGO filed a lawsuit against the operators of Floral Hills in January 2012.

7. Shopping, Food, or Beverages

- 1,478 complaints*
- Nearly 40% (530/1478) of complaints in this category involved online shopping. Other complaints involved department stores, TV shopping, and buyers/shopping clubs.
- In one case, a Central Ohio bridal shop, Alan Ray Bridal, generated more than 20 complaints after it closed its doors in April 2012. Consumers said they paid for bridal gowns and services that they never received. The AGO filed a lawsuit in July 2012 for failure to deliver and unconscionable business practices.

8. Sweepstakes or Prizes

- 1,189 complaints*
- Most of the complaints in this category involve potential scams.
- Consumers typically are contacted by phone or through the mail. In a typical scam, the con artist says the consumer has won the lottery or another prize and must send money to receive the prize.
- In about 10% of all sweepstakes complaints, consumers indicated that they provided payment, ranging from \$2 to \$100,000, with an average reported payment amount of \$6,325.
- In about 40% of sweepstakes complaints, consumers indicated that they were over the age of 60.

9. Entertainment or Travel

- 1,156 complaints*

- Over half of all complaints filed in this category were against the Beach Waterpark, which announced in March 2012 that it was closing after selling thousands of season passes for the year. The AGO filed a lawsuit against the Beach in May 2012. The case is still pending, though the park is scheduled to reopen in mid-May 2013.

10. Health and Beauty

- 1,154 complaints*
- This category includes a variety of health and beauty services, as well as medical billing, fitness/health club memberships, and hearing aids.
- In one case, the AGO received dozens of complaints against two Northeast Ohio hearing aid businesses that shared an address and phone number. Consumers said the businesses used deceptive solicitations, misrepresented prices, and refused to honor cancellations. The AGO filed a lawsuit in October for violations of Ohio consumer law.

**Complaint numbers as of Feb. 20-21, 2013. Exact numbers may fluctuate slightly depending on when the report is pulled.*