



## Don't Hire Storm Chasers for Property Damage Repairs

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MADISON, Wis. – Last night, the severe storms throughout Wisconsin have led some consumers to seek contractors who can complete repair work as soon as possible. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) recommends property owners be skeptical of door-to-door repair crews who use aggressive, high-pressure sales tactics to secure contracts after a storm.

When severe weather strikes, transient contractors follow close behind to solicit consumers in need. These traveling crews are sometimes called “storm chasers” and have been known to provide poor quality work or collect upfront payments and leave without doing any work at all.

Instead of risking your money and property by hiring strangers from another community or state, DATCP encourages consumers to ask for contractor recommendations from trusted sources such as friends, neighbors, and insurance agents. Do not let a traveling repair crew into your home, never agree to their offers before confirming they are permitted to operate in your area, and get your contracts in writing. Property owners with storm damage are encouraged to:

- Make a list and take photographs of damages like missing shingles, cracks in walls, etc.
- Call municipal officials to find out if a contractor holds the proper permits in their area, including for door-to-door sales.
- Contact a local building inspector to check if the repair work requires a permit, and again to verify the work was completed adequately before you provide final payment.
- Obtain written contracts that specify exactly what work will be done, what materials will be used, a start and completion date, and warranty details.
- Request and obtain lien waivers from any contractors hired for home repairs.
- Keep copies of all receipts, contracts, correspondence, warranties, and written materials.

Wisconsin's storm chaser law aims to protect consumers and businesses by preventing insurance fraud. Contact the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance of Wisconsin at [oci.wi.gov](http://oci.wi.gov) or (800) 236-8517 with questions about insurance agents, adjusters, or companies. Contractors:

- Cannot promise to pay any portion of an owner's property insurance deductible.
- Cannot negotiate with an insurance company on behalf of a customer. Contractors can only discuss damages and costs with insurers with the customer's permission.
- Must ask if the requested work is related to an insurance claim before they enter into a contract.
- Must notify customers of their right to cancel the contract within three business days if the customer is notified that their insurer has denied any portion of the claim for work.

For more information and consumer protection resources or to file a complaint, visit DATCP's Consumer Protection webpage at [ConsumerProtection.wi.gov](http://ConsumerProtection.wi.gov) or contact the Consumer Protection Hotline at (800) 422-7128 or [DATCPHotline@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DATCPHotline@wisconsin.gov).

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