



District Attorney's Office • 18th Judicial District

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Consumer Alert

Most Common 2014 Complaints

IRS Scams at Top of List

Telephone threats, presumably from the IRS generated the most complaints and stirred more anger and concern among consumers last year than any other category of complaints received in the 18th Judicial District Attorney's Office. Individuals of all ages reported aggressive and threatening calls from IRS imposters who accused them of owing back taxes. This disturbing trend surpassed the universal sweepstakes scams that swept the consumer line in 2013. Following closely were grievances about phony debt collector and *missed jury duty* calls from swindlers who used similar methods to extort money. Over-the-phone computer "fix" scams were also common; and not to be outdone by these newer scare tactics, older individuals continued to lose a substantial amount of money in the "*help me, grandma*" scam – a ruse that has been circulating for years. As trends go, these so-called *blackmail* scams are proliferating, and we continue to see a steady climb in all aspects of identity theft. Other common grievances:

Business Disputes: Auto parts and repair businesses received the most complaints with over half of consumers in this category reporting work defects, damaged cars, "used" new vehicles, and false claims of new car parts. Reports against phone and cable companies for excessive and/or hidden charges were widespread; and a fair number of consumers reported problems with either canceling services or obtaining refunds, especially from on-line merchants.

Contractor Complaints - Roofing contractor and company complaints rolled in following the hailstorms that hit the Front Range in 2014. Several consumers reported insurance money taken by contractors who either didn't start or complete the work. Also common were complaints about unlicensed contractors, and mechanic liens filed against homeowners by sub-contractors or suppliers who were neither paid, nor reimbursed by the contractor.

Theft/Forgery Fraud: Property theft, allegations of investment fraud, and stolen, online tax returns were reported, the latter of which is increasing every year. **Click here for IRS tips on avoiding tax-return fraud** ([Tips for Taxpayers, Victims about Identity Theft and Tax Returns](#))

Elder Financial Abuse – Accounts of financial abuse against elders accelerated after July 2014, when mandated reporting of elder abuse went into effect. Calls received included contractor fraud, financial exploitation, physical abuse and caregiver theft.

Consumer alerts listing prevention and reporting tips on many of these complaints can be found on the DA 18th website by clicking on [DA18 Website > Consumer Protection > Alerts](#). Take a moment to read them, and share with friends and family for a safer 2015!

DA – 18th Consumer Protection Line: 720-874-8547