

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Editor's note:

Travis Brooks reached out to D+AS with his story and agreed to share it with our readers. We hope the details shared in the letter below will prevent future unsuspecting homeowners from being duped by companies using similar deceptive tactics.

Houston homeowner "clearly taken advantage of"

To the editor:

I just read an article from your magazine, written some years ago, about companies fleecing unsuspecting people while carrying out garage door repairs. My family just got scammed by a company using similar tactics.

On June 23, 2022, I had a problem with my garage door, so I tried to contact the company who originally installed my door. I googled Garage Doors of

Houston (GDOH) and called the number provided during my online Google search. The dispatcher answered "Hello" and I asked, "Is this Garage Doors of Houston?" The dispatcher said "Yes."

I explained the issue with my door, and she told me a service technician would be there soon. The tech, who said he was a subcontractor, arrived within an hour. He inspected the door and determined that I had a broken spring and that the cables were bad. He recommended that I

replace all four springs and the cables. The cost would be \$160 for the cables and \$400 for each spring with a one-year warranty or \$600 for a six-year warranty. He explained the choice was between Chinese-made or American-made springs.

I thought the quote was high, but both our cars were trapped, and we desperately needed the door fixed. I agreed to the six-year warranty and American-made springs. At the time, I had no idea what a repair like this should cost but felt I could reconcile with the company.

The repairs were carried out and then I was given a bill for \$3174.90, which included \$700 in labor cost. The bill had the company name at the top of the invoice, "Garage Door Service & Repair." The tech discouraged using a credit card and said it would be an additional 5% to the bill. So I paid with a personal check.



He replaced four springs and two cables for \$3,175.



After he left, I did some research and found I had been grossly overcharged. So I immediately filed a complaint with Garage Doors of Houston, the company I thought did the repairs. Late that night, I received a sympathetic email from the owner of GDOH who said that they had not done any service repairs that day. He explained that it was most likely a third-party contractor, that this happens all of the time, and he forwarded me the article from your magazine.

After doing some research, I discovered that the number I called is associated with a completely different company. They do not use a company name when answering the phone, and the company address is a two-bedroom house in a neighborhood in Houston, Texas. I was clearly taken advantage of.

I left at least a dozen messages with a dispatcher within a two week period. A person who identified himself as a manager returned my call and said "they were evaluating my case." It's been six weeks, and I've heard nothing.

I wanted to reach out to let you know that companies like this are wreaking havoc on the unsuspecting public of Houston. There were some red flags, and I wish I had done some things differently like researching the cost of the repairs in advance and paying with a credit card so I could dispute the charges! My other takeaway is that not all garage door companies should be painted with the same brush. Garage Door Services of Houston is a reputable service provider, and the owner was very responsive, helpful, and empathetic.

Travis Brooks
Houston, Texas

Editor's note: When consumers want to file a complaint, here are suggestions of places to contact:

1. The BBB. You can complain to the Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.org) for your area. While certain companies are notorious for ignoring complaints, some will issue reimbursement after complaints are filed with the BBB.
2. The media. You can call a consumer or investigative reporter for a major television station or newspaper in your area. If this doesn't get the company to respond to you, then it will help others to avoid them.
3. The advertising company. If you found the bad company by reading an ad or a coupon, complain directly to the advertising source (e.g., Google, Val-Pak coupon books, Groupon, etc.). You might not get your money back, but that medium may stop running the scammer's ads.
4. Contractor's bureau. If your state licenses its contractors, you can file a complaint with the appropriate state agency. Do a Google search for "[YOUR STATE] contractor complaints." With enough complaints, such a company can lose its contractor's license.