

Clippings are brief summaries of recent news articles in the consumer media. These stories offer a peek at how garage door companies and products are being reported to the public.

More Hidden-Camera Investigations: Are You Next?

Local television stations are learning one easy way to get a great “gotcha” story: set up a hidden camera in a garage to catch a garage door technician who rips off consumers.

In these three stories below, TV stations in Florida, Texas, and California exposed more garage door repair companies that take advantage of homeowners. These three reports come from affiliates of three different networks: NBC, ABC, and Fox.

Read 'em and weep.

Garage Door Services (GDS) Exposed Again

Source: Jaie Avila, “Investigation: Garage door repair gamble,” WOAI-TV, San Antonio, Texas, May 15, 2015.

This investigation by the NBC affiliate in San Antonio, Texas, used the standard setup of an expert-approved garage door system with one problem: unaligned photo eyes. Five companies were randomly selected to see what they would do.

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The first three quickly fixed the problem, and the fourth helped fix the problem over the phone for free. But the fifth company wanted to replace the sensors for \$118, the springs and rollers for another \$497, and, if that didn't work, the technician would “replace the motor,” bringing the total bill to \$1,226.

The fifth company was San Antonio's Choice Overhead Door, also known as Garage Door Services or GDS (the one based in San Diego, not the GDS of USA based in Texas).

The report noted that (1) the Better Business Bureau has received 313 complaints against GDS, (2) the California Contractors State License Board has suspended GDS's license, and (3) the Texas Attorney General's Office has logged 14 complaints against GDS related to “poor or substandard service” and “overcharging for services.”

Editor's Note: This nationwide GDS operation has been attracting negative media attention since 2002, which continues to give our industry a bad reputation.

Orlando TV Investigation Reveals More Rip-Off Artists

Source: Todd Ulrich, “Action 9 confronts repair companies in hidden camera investigation,” WFTV, Orlando, Fla., May 1, 2015.

In this hidden-camera investigation by the ABC affiliate in Orlando, the tech from Garage Door Service claimed that the opener, springs, and rollers could fail anytime. He would have run up the bill to

nearly \$1,000. However, as an expert testified, the door needed nothing but to have a photo eye aligned.

The tech admitted, “I would like to sell her a lot more than that (the photo eye).” He also could not produce a card with his contractor's license number.

Another tech from “Best & Fast” said the springs had to be lubricated, at a cost of \$200 to \$300.

Editor's Note: It appears that this “Garage Door Services” is from the same chain as the one exposed in San Antonio. Now, we're starting to hear more complaints about “Best & Fast.” Read on.

Oakland: New National Garage Door Repair Chain Exposed

Source: Eric Rasmussen, “2 Investigates: Undercover video raises questions about garage door repair company,” WFTV, Oakland, Calif., April 23, 2015.

“Unnecessary repairs, high prices, and no proof of a contractor's license are just some of the consumer complaints prompting state of California investigators to take a closer look at Best & Fast Garage Door Repair of Oakland,” says this report, which aired within a few weeks of the two reports above.

In this investigation by Oakland's Fox affiliate, the door had also been professionally tuned up and inspected, but the one problem was a disconnected cable that could be fixed for “79 to 89 dollars.” Best & Fast wanted \$220 to connect the cable and another \$170 to replace the springs.

This report also differed from the previous two reported here because this investigation specifically targeted Best & Fast, which had been attracting consumer complaints. Best & Fast advertised a \$29 service call and had “websites for garage door repair in ... more than 40 other cities.” Some of the websites say all work is done by independent contractors.

Rick Lopes of the California Contractors State License Board said, “What we're seeing here is kind of a classic service and repair scam.”

Kevin Chervatin of All Bay Garage Doors, the expert who serviced the door prior to the investigation, said, “We just try to be honest and fair with everybody, and you get guys ripping people off and stealing business, and it's just irritating.”

Editor's Note: We found many more than 40 Best & Fast websites. They all appear to have been launched in the last 24 months and target cities in California, Washington, Oregon, Arizona, Texas, Colorado, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Minnesota. Coming soon to a city near you?