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Recent hail damage as well as the start of the primetime selling season for companies that want your residential alarm business has brought up questions about regulations for door-to-door solicitors.

What rules govern the actions of door-to-door solicitors in residential areas? Solicitors must register with the Burleson Police Department, provide two recent passport photographs (as well as driver's license information and Social Security number), description of the vehicle that will be used during the solicitation, and describe what will be sold or for which orders will be solicited.

Solicitors must wear City of Burleson-issued solicitor ID badges. Solicitors may not go door-to-door between 9 p.m. and 9 a.m.; solicit on public property without authorization from city council; or solicit at a residence or business that has a sign posted saying "No Solicitors," (or go to a home or business after being told that the solicitation is not welcome). Solicitors have to take a holiday. They can not go door-to-door in a neighborhood on Sundays, New Year's Day, Memorial Day, July 4, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

Who is exempt from the City registration? Alarm security companies and locksmiths are exempt because they fall under Section 1702.134 of the Occupations Code and hold state licenses from the Texas Commission.

It is not considered soliciting if handbills are placed on the door of a residence but no contact is made with that resident. Minors who are soliciting as part of fundraising for nonprofit, charitable, religious, or civic organizations as well as public or private schools or groups directly affiliated with those schools are exempt from City solicitation regulations.

If a solicitor does knock on your door, look for a sign, placed in a conspicuous place on the vehicle, identifying the solicitor as well as the company that solicitor is representing.

In 2010, the Texas Burglar and Fire Alarm Association issued an alert to homeowners concerning illegally operating and unlicensed alarm companies soliciting in neighborhoods. The alert included "red flags," including a solicitor who:

- States that police will not respond to older alarm systems;
- Implies that the salesperson is from the alarm owner's current company;
- Offers free system upgrades;
- Pressures the consumer to make a decision quickly because the offer is only good that day;
- And/or offers a substantial "discount" for placing an alarm sign on the property.

If these tactics are used, that solicitor has probably not undergone the criminal background checks that are required to obtain a Texas license to be in the alarm business. Homeowners should ask for the alarm salesperson's Department of Public Safety private security bureau pocket identification card as well as a business card from the alarm company that the salesperson claims to represent; ask for a local telephone number to contact the company, then check to see if that number works; and, always contact your current alarm company before signing any new contract so that you understand the status of your current contract.

To see if a company is licensed in Texas and to verify a salesperson's DPS pocket card identification, go to <http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/psb>.

Always call the Burleson Police Department, 817-426-9903, to report any suspicious solicitor activity. Be sure to have the facts ready, including a description of the solicitor, description of the car, who the solicitor said he/she represented, what time they were at the home, and which direction they were headed when they left.

For more information about a solicitor permit letter, solicitor permit application, and solicitor permit regulations, go to the City website, www.burlesontx.com, Departments, Police Department, Forms.