

Scammers Discover “Land of The Free”

By Jason Gage

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The locksmith industry is giving a new meaning to the phrase “Land Of The Free”. The locksmith industry is one of the most unregulated trades among all services. Most states do not require any type of licensing, certifications, or criminal background checks to own, operate or work for a locksmith company. Further more many states do not have advertising laws that require a license number on all locksmith advertisements. Most states do not even require a “due diligence” to be performed in order to make sure that the information provided by a locksmith company is even legitimate.

Until a few years ago I did not see a need to have any of these complicated laws brought into our trade. In fact, if you had asked me to vote on it I would have more than likely voted against it. Now I am a firm believer in the fact that we need to bring in regulatory laws to the locksmith trade more than ever. By the end of this article your perspective may change as well. In Central Florida the law states a hair stylist needs a special license to be a hair stylist. In Central Florida the law also states a locksmith does not need a special license to be a locksmith. As a consumer it is quite obvious to see what the harm is by not having regulations. It is the danger of not knowing who is coming to your house that dark evening when you are distressed, vulnerable, and in need of someone to secure your home. Is it a felon, a sexual predator, or even an ex-convict? Well the answer could be none of the above. It could be someone who is in the country illegally who might mislead you, defraud you, destroy your locks, doors, and when he is done, give you a bone chilling feeling. When he leaves you will probably call another locksmith to secure your home from the instinctive feeling that something just wasn't right. Now to convince a locksmith that we need regulations is a little harder and more sensitive issue. Locksmiths are a little more caught in their ways. In many cases I have found that as long as a locksmith is making a living large or small he is content. Try to take his livelihood away he is like a cobra striking his prey. The thought of getting the government more involved in their business or livelihood scares them. They feel that if the regulations come into place it will affect their livelihood in a bad way. Some may feel this way because of the fear of classes and tests, some for its failure to meet its requirements. I don't know what the underlined part means. If locksmiths became more involved they would see that there

are many words in the **ALOA** bylaws which will protect them against that which they fear most.

In 2007 we are faced with an epidemic that our industry has not seen before. This epidemic started a few years ago slowly choking the life out of mobile and storefront locksmith businesses across the United States. It started with the changing of time, technology, and the internet, with no new laws to follow. It is the epidemic of the locksmith scammers, Aka Locksmith mafia, AKA, Locksmith Gypsies, AKA Fraud smiths, or what ever else your state may categorize them under.

The Scam starts with the purchase of hundreds of phone numbers in a single local area. Many of these numbers are purchased through the scammer's own phone companies who buy numbers from the main local provider. The phone numbers are then advertised in an unethical and monopolizing manner. When these numbers are advertised it is not uncommon to find a false address, and a false business name attached to them. This is done to give the customer a nice warm feeling that they are calling a local company that may be close to them. You will often find a more concentrated number of phone numbers with false addresses around successful locksmith shops. This is done to lure the business from legitimate locksmith stores. You see, it is a simple concept. A customer drives by a shop and sees how nice it is. A few days later he needs a locksmith and remembers the nice shop that he passed. He calls 411, goes online, or looks in the phone book to try to find the number for the shop he passed a few days before. To his amazement there are nearly 20 to choose from on the same street! The legitimate locksmith business never had a chance. The tactic of luring business in this manner is in violation of the civil Lanham Act and is a slam dunk in a federal court. These advertising schemes are also defrauding the customer into believing they are legitimate locksmiths in the local area.

The local phone number advertised by the scammer when called is often routed to a call center in New York. Some of these scammers are actual advertising companies out of New York and various locations across the US. These companies specialize in monopolizing the internet, 411 systems, and the yellow pages.

The scammers often use local subcontractors to run the calls received from their advertisements. The questions are, are they really subcontractors or are they just a corporate layer of an organized crime ring? There are a few copycats who used to work for the companies who now practice these fraudulent business practices. Many lead back to the same place of origination; it is almost like a franchise with many layers of corporate protection. Each time one layer gets removed they put another corporate entity officer in place. It is like a cancer that was caught too late. These so called subcontractors arrive at jobs across the US and charge up to 10 times the going rate. Most locksmiths I have spoken with don't understand how consumers pay such a high bill. They say that their customers squeal over their small bill with reasonable prices. After speaking with many complaining consumers' I now see why the bills are being paid. It is a combination of things I am hearing. It is the fact that they show up to the consumer's house or car, in unmarked vehicles. They have heavy foreign accents, and they are full of threats, instilling the fear into the customer to pay.

All of the scammer's seem to have a few things in common. The common principles of the scammer's subcontractors seem to be unmarked vehicles, heavy foreign accents, no receipts, receipts written on service call books, receipts written on standard receipt books with their business name written in by hand, extremely high prices, not equipped with the proper tools for the job, no trade skills, destruction of customers locks and doors, answering the phone "locksmith", and when quoting prices they quote \$35 Or \$45 plus labor. How are these scammers learning our locksmith trade? The oddest part is that the locksmiths who are going out of business are being confronted by these scammers and are being asked to run service calls for them. They are also asked to train their people for a price of \$300 per person per week. The once legitimate locksmiths are one by one joining the scammers for their unknown short stay. I have talked to many who were legitimate locksmiths at one time who ran calls and then trained the scammers. They all tell me that the scammers will use once legitimate locksmiths or who ever they can to train there crime ring. They advertise in their foreign magazine to recruit workers, when a few scammers are trained in they will part their ways with all who are not of their same race. (I don't know what this means either)The money is attractive to the once legitimate locksmith at the time because they have to eat. If they only knew the damage they are causing.

We need to pass Federal Legislation for all states to at a minimum, require all locksmiths to register with the state and wear an ID badge with a registration number on it.

All locksmiths who advertise anywhere must post registration numbers on advertisements. All advertisements must include accurate registered business names and addresses (this does not limit you from listing cities just false addresses)

Each state needs to then incorporate their own individual laws.

The days of the locksmith's Trade secrets being protected by the hometown locksmith are over. In fact my research has shown at the increasing rate of progression of scammers, with in two years we will be lucky if there are any hometown locksmiths left. The locksmiths who have not had this affect them yet, this is your fight too. It is not a matter of if is this going to affect you as a locksmith, but rather when. What can we do to reclaim what is rightfully ours? Well the question is, are we all willing to do our part or just a few of us? We need everyone on board to make this happen.

Please view www.storefront-mobilelocksmith.com this is a site which has current news about the locksmith epidemic. This site offers locksmiths a free listing to locksmiths in there city. Storefront-mobilelocksmith.com performs a du diligence on all information provided to them before adding to the directory.

For a free Listing in storefront-mobilelocksmith.com please send the following information to :

Storefrontlocksmith.com
1631 Rock Springs Rd #141
Apopka, FL, 32703

1. A copy of your occupational license
2. State if you want the address on your occupational license to be listed on your listing or just the city.
3. list the phone number you want attached to you listing
4. (Optional) Picture of your van or storefront business.

Please include your email address for contact purposes. To reclaim our livelihood, trade, respect, and piece of mind we must all do our part not a one along for a free rides.

1. Email or fax this letter along with comments to your local legislator, (Google search your city and the word legislator example "Atlanta legislator")
2. Go to www.aloa.org click on the box " consumer defrauded by a phony locksmith" (Click on your state and send a complaint to your states Attorney General describing this issue, send customers here as well)
3. Email and fax this article along with comments to your states FBI office (Google search your state and the word FBI example "Georgia FBI")
4. File a complaint Internet fraud complaint government site www.Ic3.gov
5. Any receipts you receive that look fabricated or hand written name on the top out form 3949a tax fraud form (Google search "3949a" and send them a copy of the receipt)
6. Contact your local news and have them do a story on these scammers ☞