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## NYS DCP reminds New Yorkers of home improvement scams, offers protection tips

Guest Editorial by the New York Department of State's Division of Consumer Protection

For this week's "Tuesday's Tips," the New York Department of State's Division of Consumer Protection shares tips to prevent home improvement scams.

Home improvement scams have consistently ranked among New Yorkers' top 5 consumer complaints. As we head into spring, New Yorkers may be considering making improvements around their homes. However, contractor fraud and home improvement scams can cost homeowners thousands of dollars and leave them with poor workmanship or unfinished projects.

Secretary of State Robert J. Rodriguez said, "Unfortunately, springtime can be scamming time when it comes to home improvements. Imagine having work done on your house only to find out the 'improvements' actually made the problems worse because of shoddy work or someone ran off

with your money without finishing the job. Before agreeing to home improvement projects, I urge you to learn how to avoid costly mistakes with tips from our Consumer Protection Division."

Before you decide on a contractor, consider the following list of tips to avoid common home improvement scams.

•**Shop around:** Get at least three estimates that include detailed information about materials, services to be provided, and a projected timeline.

•**Know who you hire:** Ask friends and neighbors to recommend contractors they have worked with. Check the references provided by the contractors. Look into local home builder associations that may recommend reputable contractors and provide support if there is a dispute.

•**Check your local government licensing requirements:** NYS does not license home improvement contractors, but some

counties and local municipalities do. Look into what is required in your area, and be sure the contractor has proper licensure and has insurance.

•**Get it in writing** and be sure the contract includes:

✓ The contractors' name, address and phone number.

✓ Estimated timeline with start and finish date.

✓ Detailed description of the work to be completed.

✓ Detailed pricing that includes a list of supplies and labor costs.

✓ Scammers will knock on your door suggesting improvements they can help you with like new windows or the latest solar panels. Some may claim to be in the area and to have materials left over from a previous job.

✓ Scammers will pressure you for an immediate decision.

✓ Scammers will recommend a lender they know to help pay for the job. Don't finance through your contractor.

•**Know your rights:** You have three days to cancel after signing a contract for home improvements. All cancellations must be in writing.

•**Never pay full price up front:** Establish a payment schedule tied to completing specific jobs. Don't pay with cash or wire transfer. Withhold final payment until the entire project is completed to your satisfaction.

•**Beware:**  
✓ Running into a problem? First, speak with the contractor and try to reach a resolution. If a resolution is not possible, file a complaint with your local consumer protection agency, the New York State Division of Consumer Protection at <https://dos.ny.gov/consumer-protection>, or the New York State attorney general at <https://ag.ny.gov/file-complaint>.

For more tips, check out our comprehensive guide designed to help homeowners avoid home improvement scams.

## Piper to hold flag dedication ceremony at Lewiston Cemetery

Hello everyone!

I have been busy working on the cemetery enhancement project currently in the works. As of this moment – with the generous donations I have received – I have been able to order the flagpole complete with a flag. It is much nicer than the one I had originally planned on placing. My goal was to be able to honor all who have served with a fitting tribute. It will rise 20 feet into the air and be created of brushed aluminum, a befitting tribute. It will be placed in the Oakwood section of the cemetery between the potter's field and historic cemetery plaque monuments.

I have been informed that the Lewiston Community Lions Club will be donating memorial trees to enhance this project. Along with these will be the placement of a granite marker dedicating the flagpole and its beneficiaries who made it possible for me to make it a reality through their generosity. Along with this dedication will be the unveiling of the grave marker of Capt. James Van Cleve who was a famous ship captain and artist who resided in Lewiston with his wife, Harriet Barton Van Cleve. He passed away in 1888, and I have been unable to find any records of his wife's death. The marker is possible through

the generosity of Jim Farchione of Niagara Monument Works, as well as donating a portion of the cost of the flagpole monument.

My original plan was to also add a granite bench to finish the park-like setting I had envisioned. It would also be of rough-cut granite to complement flagpole and marker. I have been informed the cost would be \$1,500, including installation in the cemetery. This being my last historical project in the cemetery, my hope is that this project, too, will be completed in time for a tentative May 26 dedication ceremony at 1 p.m. following the Van Cleve unveiling at noon, next to the old church in

the original cemetery.

I give my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to Jim Farchione for his generosity, and to my colleague, Justin Higner (who portrays Capt. Van Cleve for historical productions) for all of their guidance and advice concerning my historical projects.

Donations to complete this project would be most appreciated and accepted at the village clerk's office.

Hope to see everyone in May. With much appreciation.

*Russ Piper*  
Village of Lewiston historian



## McKimmie presents AED funds to St. John de LaSalle

The Niagara County Legislature has assisted in protecting health and safety for the community of St. John de LaSalle, a part of the Niagara Falls Roman Catholic Family of Parishes.

During a recent parish council meeting, there was a discussion about the benefits in being prepared for a heart-related emergency. Members were aware of the efforts taken to save the life of Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin. The parish's Holy Name men's club was assigned to secure an AED. As a first step, it reached out to Niagara County Legislator Chris McKimmie, who said there may be funds available through community partnership funding. With help from environmental health and safety professional Walt Garrow, who also worked with a local safety supply company to define the instrument specifications, McKimmie was able to write a resolution, which he successfully presented to the County Legislature.

Pictured is the presentation of the County Legislature's check to the Rev. James Kirkpatrick. From left: Anthony Casilio, John Jesz (from the men's club at St. Vincent de Paul Parish), Secretary Michael Casale, Pastor Kirkpatrick, McKimmie and Treasurer Garrow. (Submitted)

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