



The Informed Consumer

Consumer Affairs Branch e-newsletter
Fairfax County Department of Cable and Consumer Services

Winter 2014

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Visit **Consumer Central**:

- File a Complaint Online
- Tenant-Landlord Handbook
- Consumer Protection Commission (CPC)
- Tenant-Landlord Commission (TLC)
- Property Owners' and Condominium Association Resources
- Consumer Focus
- Your Community, Your Call

Fairfax County Consumer Affairs Celebrates National Consumer Protection Week 2014



Looking to protect yourself from fraud, identity theft, and scams? Maybe you're wondering about the best way to use credit, how to shop for a used car, or maximize your security online. Fairfax County Consumer Affairs can help you answer these questions during National Consumer Protection Week, which takes place the first week of March each year.

Here in Fairfax, Consumer Affairs will be hosting seminars and presentations around the county. Susan Jones, Branch Chief, explained, "National Consumer Protection Week is an opportunity for our agency to reach out to the community and spotlight consumer rights and responsibilities, steer consumers away from scams, and share the tools you can use to protect your credit and identity."

Consumer Affairs will be hosting the following events during NCPW:

- How to Get Money-Saving Information Before You Buy a Product or Service
- Connecting Your Home: Fiber, Copper, and Wireless
- What You Need To Know Before You Hire a Contractor
- Protecting Your Personal Information from Fraud and Identity Theft
- Is Your Diamond a True Gem or a Brilliant Deception?

In addition to seminars around the county, the Department of Cable and Consumer Services will have a booth set up each day from 11:30 a.m.—1 p.m. with educational information at the Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax in front of Suite 127.

National Consumer Protection Week Schedule of Events

MONEY-SAVING INFORMATION BEFORE YOU BUY A PRODUCT OR SERVICE

Tuesday, March 4: Patrick Henry Library, 101 Maple Avenue East, Vienna, 2 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Are you seeking health care resources, investment data, or want to know more about a product or service, such as a mobile device or home improvement contractor? Do you know how to use databases at your local library, or how to get consumer and tenant-landlord information 24/7 online before you spend your money or sign a contract? Join the Fairfax County Consumer Affairs Branch and library staff to learn about available resources. Registration not required.

CONNECTING YOUR HOME – FIBER, COPPER, AND WIRELESS

Tuesday, March 4: Fairfax County Government Center, Conf. Rooms 4/5, 12 p.m. – 1 p.m.

Do you have questions about how to choose a provider of telephone, television, and Internet services in today's broadband world? Join the Communications Policy and Regulation Division as they discuss the types of networks available in Fairfax County, factors to consider in choosing a provider, 9-1-1 issues, and the transition from legacy copper-based telephone networks to fiber-optic systems. Registration not required.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU HIRE A CONTRACTOR

Wednesday, March 5: Mason District Center, 6507 Columbia Pike, Annandale, 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.

If you are planning home repairs or want to get started on a major remodeling project, you need to know how to hire a contractor. Join the Fairfax County Consumer Affairs Branch for information on why and how to hire a licensed contractor so you can avoid home repair scams. This workshop is sponsored jointly with the Annandale Chapter of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE). Registration not required.

PROTECTING YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION FROM FRAUD & IDENTITY THEFT

Thursday, March 6: JCCNV, 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax, 12:30 p.m. – 2 p.m.

Protecting your personal and financial information whether shopping in the mall, online, or by mail, requires awareness, alertness, and knowledge. To find out how to protect yourself against fraudulent charges and identity theft, join the Fairfax County Consumer Affairs Branch in partnership with the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia to discuss steps you can take as part of your daily routine to reduce your risk should a data or security breach occur. Registration for non-members of the JCCNV is requested.

IS YOUR DIAMOND A TRUE GEM OR A BRILLIANT DECEPTION?

Thursday, March 6: Fairfax County Government Center, Conf. Rooms 4/5, 12 p.m. – 1 p.m.

Buying a diamond requires an understanding of not just the price but the qualities and characteristics that make it unique. Before you buy the "perfect" diamond or to find out the value of diamonds or other jewelry you own, join Graduate Gemologist, Master Gemologist Appraiser, Martin D. Fuller, to learn the fundamentals of diamonds. In this hands-on workshop, he will show you how to tell if your diamond is a true gem or a brilliant deception. *Bring your diamonds and questions!*

Registration required unless otherwise stated. To register for an event or to request reasonable ADA accommodations, please email consumer@fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-222-8435 TTY 711.

Need Advice? Ask an Investigator

Investigators are available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for walk-in assistance and advice. Call 703-222-8435 TTY: 711 or submit a question via e-mail consumer@fairfaxcounty.gov.

File A Complaint

File a complaint online or request a complaint form in the mail.

Search Complaint History

Research the complaint history of a company prior to completing a transaction.

Mark Your Calendars

National Consumer Protection Week 2014

Fairfax County Consumer Affairs will be hosting a series of community events from March 3-7, 2014. For more information, please email consumer@fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-222-8435.

In the Spotlight

Your Community, Your Call

Consumer Affairs Branch

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Phone: 703-222-8435
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consumer@fairfaxcounty.gov
Visit Our Website



Virginia Department of Treasury Unclaimed Property Program

Many states have Unclaimed Property programs that are responsible for returning money, stocks, bonds, dividends, utility deposits, insurance proceeds, tangible property, and more to their rightful owners.

Each year, Fairfax County Consumer Affairs partners with the Virginia Department of Treasury Unclaimed Property Program to return funds back to their owners during National Consumer Protection Week.



Over \$419,000 and 2,400 shares of stock were returned to consumers in Fairfax County during NCPW 2013!

During National Consumer Protection Week, Virginia Department of Treasury representatives will be available to meet with consumers and search for Unclaimed Property from **10 a.m.—3 p.m.** at the following locations:

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Monday, March 3 | Fairfax County Courthouse, Fairfax VA |
| Tuesday, March 4 | Pennino Building, Fairfax VA |
| Wednesday, March 5 | Herrity Building, Fairfax VA |
| Thursday, March 6 | Government Center, Fairfax VA |
| Friday, March 7 | South County Center, Alexandria VA |

If you would like more information about the Unclaimed Property Program, or to search on your own, please visit the secure, government-run web site:

VAMoneySearch.org

There is no fee to recover unclaimed property through the Virginia Department of Treasury's Unclaimed Property Program. If you feel that you have been a victim of an unclaimed property recovery scam, please contact Consumer Affairs and speak with an investigator.

Information about unclaimed property and government imposter scams can be found on the FTC web site: www.consumer.ftc.gov/.

The full schedule of National Consumer Protection Week events can be found by visiting fairfaxcounty.gov/consumer.

2014 Virginia General Assembly Legislative Session

The 2014 Regular Session of the Virginia General Assembly convened on Wednesday, January 8, 2014. This session is a long session and will adjourn on Saturday, March 8, 2014. Citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia can take an active role in the legislative process.

The Virginia General Assembly website offers online resources to help the public become more engaged. The Legislative Information System allows tracking and review of legislation and committee agendas prior to meetings. To receive free email notifications about specific bills, sign up for the free Lobbyist-in-a-Box service, and track up to five bills without charge. Search for proposed bills specifically related to common interest communities, the Property Owners' Association Act, or the Condominium Act.

Volunteer leaders are encouraged to stay informed and engaged. The Virginia Legislative Action Committee (VALAC) is a committee of Community Associations Institute (CAI). The VALAC keeps abreast of legislation that impacts common interest communities. For more information visit the VALAC's website.

Your Community, Your Call

The most recent edition of *Your Community, Your Call—What's On Your Mind?* can be viewed on Mondays at 8 p.m. on Fairfax County Government Channel 16 or on Video on Demand. Kenneth Chadwick, attorney with Chadwick, Washington, Moriarty, Elmore & Bunn, P.C. and Betsy Johns, Partner/CFO, PCAM with National Realty Partners, LLC joined Michelle Thompson to respond to your questions on a variety of topics.

Due to the overwhelming amount of questions that we received, Kenneth Chadwick and Betsy Johns will return to respond to your questions and more in *Your Community, Your Call—What's On Your Mind? - Part II* on Tuesday, March 18, 2014. During the show, call in your questions at 703-818-1445 or email us at ycyc@fairfaxcounty.gov.

2014 Your Community, Your Call Schedule

| Day of the Week | Date | Time |
|-----------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Tuesday | March 18, 2014 | 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. |
| Tuesday | May 20, 2014 | 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. |
| Tuesday | July 15, 2014 | 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. |
| Tuesday | September 16, 2014 | 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. |
| Tuesday | November 25, 2014 | 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. |

Virginia Department of Transportation

Report a non-emergency work request for state maintained roads using VDOT's Online system. Submit a separate request for each concern. Requests include service for filling potholes, drainage culvert cleaning and repair, guardrail repair, signs, traffic lights, animal, tree and debris removal from roadway, and shoulder repair.

2014 WMCCAI Annual Conference and Expo

Washington Metropolitan Chapter Community Associations Institute invites you to attend the largest community association industry event in the Washington metropolitan area on March 22, 2014, at the Washington Convention Center. The WMCCAI Conference & Expo will feature educational sessions on pertinent topics that affect those who live in and work with community associations. Register Today!

Join Our Subscriber List

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