

Did you know?

December 2005

CONSUMER COMPLAINTS

Almost all of us have had problems with consumer goods that we have purchased at one time or another. What can we do to avoid some of these problems? What is the best way to deal with a complaint?

Before You Buy

- ❖ Did you know that stores are not legally required to give your money back unless the goods you purchased were defective or unfit for its intended purpose? Even then, the store could repair or exchange the merchandise. So, be sure you understand the store's return or exchange policy before you buy.
- ❖ Always get several estimates.
- ❖ Check with the Better Business Bureau to find out if any complaints have been made against the company, and if so, how they were resolved.
- ❖ Read any contracts that you are required to sign.
- ❖ In door-to-door sales over \$50, you have a 10 day right of cancellation. You must mail a notice of cancellation to the supplier by registered mail within seven days. This applies only to contracts signed at your home.
- ❖ Keep cancelled cheques, receipts, warranties, estimates and contracts. You will need them later on if you have problems.

The Unhappy Customer

Most businesses rely on customer goodwill as an effective way to advertise. They will probably try to help you resolve your problems.

If you have a complaint:

- ❖ Make sure your complaint is justified.
- ❖ Talk to the salesperson or the Customer Service Department, if the store has one. Ask to speak to a manager or someone higher in authority if you are still dissatisfied. Be firm, but polite. Give the company an opportunity to correct the problem.
- ❖ Record the name of the person you talk to and any promises that are made, such as dates and what will be done.
- ❖ If required, write a letter of complaint to someone higher up. Provide details and photocopies of documents. You will get a better result if you keep to the facts and are polite. Don't threaten.
- ❖ If all else fails, consider a **Small Claims Court action** or contact the **Better Business Bureau** 604-682-2711 which provides mediation and arbitration services in disputes which cannot be settled through compromise or legal action. The **Business Practices & Consumer Protection Authority** at 604-320-1667 provides assistance in resolving consumer problems, and information on consumer rights.