



Media Release

For immediate release

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Buyer Beware for High Pressure Door-to-Door Heating Equipment Sales

Saskatchewan plumbing and heating specialists are encouraging homeowners to do their homework and take steps to protect themselves before investing in new heating equipment this fall.

The Mechanical Contractors Association of Saskatchewan (MCAS), Natural Gas Appliance and Equipment Association (NGAEDA), and SaskEnergy Network Members located across the province are warning Saskatchewan residents to properly research door-to-door salespeople and out-of-province companies offering discounted heating equipment.

“With winter on its way, upgrading to high-efficiency heating equipment can go a long way to saving money and increasing comfort, however it really is a buyer beware market when making this type of purchase,” said Carolyn Bagnell, Executive Director for MCAS. “If a deal sounds too good to be true, it often is; and no deals for heating equipment should be valid for only one day – that is just not good business practice for the industry. ”

If the salesperson for the company claims to be associated with another business or government agency, contact the organization directly to verify a relationship does exist.

“Don’t be afraid to ask a lot of questions, thoroughly review financing contracts before you sign, and shop around by gathering quotes from other contractors, such as your local SaskEnergy Network Member,” added Bagnell.

A contractor should be able to provide a valid business license for Saskatchewan and the local municipality, proof of liability insurance, and all necessary permits. A reputable contractor will also not need to see your utility bill as they can provide estimated expected savings based on your current equipment. Estimated savings can also be calculated with online tools available on saskenergy.com.

Contractors should have a solid work history and several references available. According to Scott Grieve, President of NGAEDA, customers should learn as much as they can about a contractor’s qualifications and previous work, and check the company’s reviews with consumer agencies such as the Better Business Bureau of Saskatchewan.

“We hear of unfortunate cases where some customers have felt pressured into quickly signing agreements, or the seller falsely claims to be affiliated with local associations, businesses or Crown Corporations, only to end up paying thousands of dollars more than expected,” Grieve said. “To avoid being stuck with an unexpectedly large bill, poorly installed or outdated equipment that is not serviceable, make sure to review the entire contract before you sign it – especially the fine print, where extra costs are often hidden.”

If the contract has already been signed, and the customer feels they have been misled on the service, equipment or cost, they have the ability to halt the transaction within 10 days of signing the contract.

For a list of recommended questions to ask your heating contractor, visit www.mca-sask.com.

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BACKGROUNDER

PURCHASING HEATING EQUIPMENT:

- Door-to-door heating equipment sales are occurring more frequently in Saskatchewan, customers should be cautious of signing contracts before they have all the information they need.
- Before signing a contract to purchase heating equipment, consider the following:
 - Ask questions: Does the seller have a service location in Saskatchewan? Are they able to service your equipment regularly, provide ongoing maintenance or warranty work?
 - Take the time to do your research and gather information: Get multiple quotes by contacting other local contractors to determine what options are best for you. Does the company have references you can call? Online reviews? Reports with the Better Business Bureau?
 - Make some calls. If the company is claiming to be associated with another business, government agency or Corporation (such as SaskEnergy or Natural Resources Canada), be sure to follow up with that business or agency to verify a relationship does exist.
 - Read the fine print. Before signing any contracts, be sure you understand the terms in full and are aware of any extra costs. The payment terms should be clearly outlined.
 - Customers should not feel pressured to sign a contract at initial contact with salesperson – take time to fully review all details of the agreement. Otherwise, you could be left with a higher end cost, poorly installed and/or out of date equipment that can become a safety hazard, or equipment that is unable to be serviced by the company should something go wrong.
- If you've already signed a contract and you were misled on the service or the cost, don't be afraid to halt the transaction. You can cancel a door-to-door sales contract by providing written notification within 10 days of signing the contract.
- You can also contact the Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority (FCAA) of the Government of Saskatchewan at 306-787-5645 or 1-877-880-5550.

WINTER HEATING TIPS:

- With the winter heating season on its way, there are many things customers can do to maximize their energy dollars during the coldest months:
 - Invest in a high-efficiency ENERGY STAR® certified furnace with a brushless DC motor, which helps customers save more than 30 per cent annually on heating costs compared to an old standard efficiency furnace.

- Keep your furnace clean, lubricated and properly adjusted with annual maintenance. If your furnace is working at peak efficiency it will use less energy and cost less to operate.
 - Clean or replace the filter every one to two months – a dirty filter reduces the airflow and forces the furnace to run longer to heat your home.
 - Install a programmable thermostat. You can save 2% on your heating bill for every 1 °C you turn down your thermostat. With a programmable thermostat to consistently lower your heat when you don't need it, you could save up to \$61 a year.
 - Add insulation to basement walls.
- Participating SaskEnergy Network Members offer competitive financing rates (oac) on the purchase of ENERGY STAR certified equipment. Financing as low as 0% is available on ENERGY STAR certified natural gas tank water heaters. These programs are developed in collaboration with SaskEnergy.

The ***Mechanical Contractors Association of Saskatchewan (MCAS)*** is a provincial, non-profit trade association affiliated with the Mechanical Contractors Association of Canada and represents plumbing and heating contractors in their relationship with the construction industry, legislative departments of municipal and provincial government, and other industry-related bodies.

<http://www.mca-sask.com/>

The role of the ***Natural Gas Appliance and Equipment Association (NGAEDA)*** is to advise, promote and educate its membership and consumers on the uses, benefits and availability of natural gas equipment and service throughout the province with the intent to increase sales of natural gas burning equipment. <http://ngaeda.com/>

SaskEnergy Network Members are independent retailers and contractors in your community – working with SaskEnergy to give you easier access to the benefits of natural gas. A list of Members around the province is available at http://www.saskenergy.com/network_members/default.asp

In addition to providing you with the most up-to-date natural gas information and technology, SaskEnergy Network Members offer a number of programs and services, including: heating equipment annual maintenance service; appliance sales and installation; convenient in-store financing (oac); AIR MILES[®] reward miles; and the ENERGY STAR[®] Loan Program.

Commercial SaskEnergy Network Members offer businesses and commercial customers a variety of energy efficiency programs and services, including: equipment leasing options; Commercial Boiler Program and Commercial HVAC Program (which end on November 30th, 2017); and information on energy efficient systems.