

Although the Office of Attorney General is prohibited from providing legal advice or assistance to members of the public, we provide the following information for your convenience:

MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS

Some magazine subscription offers are nothing more than a subscription for financial agony. Don't be tricked into paying hundreds of dollars for multi-year subscriptions to magazines you don't want or can't afford.

Telephone Solicitations: Typically, a telephone solicitor will offer several magazines for a low weekly or monthly fee. The sales pitch can be so slick that you don't realize how much it costs until the bill arrives. Don't give your credit card number over the phone for verification or computer purposes. Some telemarketers avoid identifying themselves as magazines salespeople or they claim the company is "approved" by the government, when no government agency exists to approve magazine-selling operations.

Door to Door Sales: Magazine subscription firms hire young workers to collect as many subscriptions as they can, and these workers move quickly across the state. The young people at your door may tell you that they are trying to earn points to win scholarships or trips to Europe. They may claim to have sold magazines to your neighbors. After you make a purchase, you may be asked to rate the salespeople to help determine who will win scholarships or trips. The rating form is on the back of the sales contract so that when you send in the rating form, you no longer have a copy of the contact you signed.

Magazine subscriptions sold over the phone and door-to-door usually are very expensive, but that's only the beginning. Confusing billing practices are also typical of these types of sales, including sending double or triple billing notices, multiple renewal reminders, and renewal reminders with new subscriptions included. If you call to cancel the subscription, watch out! The magazine subscription company often records the conversation and claims the recording is proof the deal is legitimate. These companies often threaten legal action for nonpayment.

Before agreeing to purchase a subscription to any magazine, ask for the cost of each individual magazine subscription, the length of the subscription period, the total cost of your order, and whether renewals are automatic. Ask the salesperson for the name, address, and phone number of the company. Get a written copy of the sales terms and read it carefully to make sure you understand what you will be receiving and how much it will cost. Remember, any paper you sign can become a legally binding contract.

These companies often break the law when they solicit your business, and that is grounds for you to break the contract.

North Dakota's "**Home Solicitation Sales**" law gives you three days to cancel a contract when a seller has contacted you over the phone or away from the seller's normal place of business. People aged 65 years or older have 15 days to cancel. The seller must inform you of this right verbally and you must receive a copy of it in order for the contract to be legally binding. This law applies to purchases of \$25 or more. The right cancel begins once you receive the written agreement. Even if you only make a partial payment under \$25 at the time of sale, the three-day right still holds. It is the seller's responsibility to provide you with a notice of your right to cancel.

If you decide to cancel, immediately write to the company. Send a copy of the contract you signed and the right to cancel notice. Keep a copy of any correspondence in case you have further problems.