

Office of Fair Trading fact sheet

Beware of flood repair scammers

Residents and businesses should be on guard for dodgy traders' tricks following the floods.

- The majority of traders working on flood clean-up and repairs are honest and fair, but it is likely that some unscrupulous itinerant traders will be drawn to flood areas to prey on the desperation of householders and businesses.
- Unscrupulous traders offer everything from roof repairs and electrical work to resurfacing damaged driveways, but they're not always the good thing they appear to be.
- They may be unlicensed and unqualified, providing sub-standard work or failing to do what they say they will.
- Itinerant traders often offer guarantees, which could be extremely difficult to enforce after they leave the region.
- Rules that give consumers a 10-day cooling-off period for work costing more than \$75 doesn't apply when emergency repairs are needed after natural disasters.
- Consumers must be even more vigilant at a time when they are probably feeling overwhelmed and vulnerable.
- Contact your insurer for information and advice before engaging anyone to perform emergency repairs.
- If you are approached by a company you don't know, go online to check their website. Call their head office to confirm their existence, or check with someone else in town if they've used the trader's services.
- Ask the trader for identification. If the job requires building work, ask for a Building Services Authority licence to demonstrate they are licensed to perform that work.
- Ask for a contract and ensure all paperwork including quotes, invoices, and receipts has the trader's name, Australian Business Number (ABN) and address on it.
- Don't feel pressured to take up an offer on the spot. Do some research, seek quotes and most importantly, give yourself time to think it.
- Check quotes carefully to avoid being overcharged. Some itinerant traders add extra square metres or deliberately miscalculate the job.

For more information:

- To report any suspicious business activity to the Office of Fair Trading, visit www.fairtrading.qld.gov.au or call 13 QGOV (13 74 68).
- Consumers can contact the State Emergency Service (SES) for help following a storm or flood on 13 25 00.
- To check if a tradesman is licensed to perform the type of work you need, visit www.bsa.qld.gov.au.
- For information on how the SES can help in the event of a disaster visit www.emergency.qld.gov.au/ses.