

Inter-Office Memo: Don't Get Bilked by an Office Supply Scam

We need your help to make sure we don't become a victim to costly office supply fraud. This is a nationwide problem affecting businesses, churches, and fraternal and charitable organizations; altogether, organizations like ours lose millions of dollars to bogus office supply firms.

The Federal Trade Commission has a number of suggestions that we can follow to help us avoid paying for goods and services that we didn't order, from labels to light bulbs, toner to toilet paper. We need to be cautious in our dealings with telemarketers and implement and follow good purchasing control practices. Please review and follow these suggestions.

- **Get to know our designated buyers.**

Our buyer is Kevin Murphy and can be reached at 698-1272. All purchase orders should go through these employees. If someone calls you about ordering supplies, say, **"I'm not authorized to place orders. If you want to sell us something, you must speak to Kevin Murphy and get a purchase order."** If someone calls asking for the manufacturer and model of our copiers, refer them to our designated buyers. Be skeptical of "cold" or unsolicited calls and practice saying "no" to high pressure sales tactics. Legitimate companies don't use pressure to force a snap decision.

- **Check all documentation.**

When merchandise arrives, verify that it matches the shipper's bill of lading and our purchase order. Pay special attention to brands and quantity, and refuse any merchandise that doesn't match up or isn't suitable for our equipment. If everything is in order, send a copy of the bill of lading to Rosie Ochoa in Accounts Payable at 698-1366.

- **Exercise our rights.**

If we receive supplies or bills for services we didn't order, don't pay. Don't return the unordered merchandise, either. If you're reasonably confident that there has not been a legitimate mistake about the order, we can treat any unordered merchandise we receive as a gift. It's illegal for a seller to send us bills or dunning notices for merchandise we didn't order or ask us to send back the merchandise — even if the seller offers to pay the shipping costs. What's more, if the seller sends us items that are different from our order in brand, type, quantity, size, or quality — and hasn't gotten our approval first — we may treat the substitutions as unordered merchandise. We can treat unordered services the same way. But always consider the possibility that the seller has made an honest mistake.

The FTC's Telemarketing Sales Rule offers us other protections in business-to-business sales of non-durable office or cleaning supplies and most sales of goods or services to individuals, groups or associations. According to the Rule, telemarketers must tell us it's a sales call — and who's doing the selling — before they make their pitch. And before we pay, they must tell us the total cost of the products or services they're offering, any restrictions on getting or using them, and whether a sale is final or non-refundable.

- **Report fraud.**

If you think we've been scammed, contact Kevin Murphy in our office at . We will report the fraud to the FTC, or our state Attorney General, local consumer protection office or Better Business Bureau.

If you have questions about these procedures, please contact Kevin Murphy at 698-1272. If you'd like to learn more about business-related frauds and ways you can help protect our organization, visit the FTC online at ftc.gov.