

Carpet Cleaner Convicted In Southland Bait & Switch Scam

July 22, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Adam Radinsky, Deputy City Attorney
310-458-8327



Sharon , Sean , Gilboa, the owner of a Los Angeles-based carpet cleaning company, pled guilty yesterday to ten criminal counts stemming from his company 's widespread fraud operation in Southern California.

The company was formerly known as Clean Dry USA. It later changed names to Target Carpet Care, Clean N ' Dry Carpet and more recently SoCal Dry-Tech.

The company ran glossy color ads in the Clipper Magazine, Money Mailer, and other prominent advertising circulars. The ads offered to clean three rooms of carpet for \$49.95, using special 'dry' cleaning technology. However, when customers requested service, a very different scenario took place:

- The company sent an operative to the customer 's home who used bullying, intimidation, and false statements to coerce the customer into paying many times the advertised price. Often the operative began 'cleaning' before the customer agreed to any work, or to a price.
- The operatives charged widely varying prices based on the perceived vulnerability of the customer.
- Elderly customers were charged more than other customers.
- The service provided was usually worthless. Most customers carpeting was left wet and in worse condition than before.

The Santa Monica City Attorney 's Office began investigating the company after receiving a complaint from an 85-year-old local resident who responded to the company 's ad. The operative demanded that she pay \$2,000.00 for him to clean the carpet in her small, 570 square foot apartment. When she balked at the price, the operative lowered his demand to \$995, then to \$795. The woman, intimidated, finally agreed to pay \$560.00 - still more than 1000% over the advertised price. Her carpet was wet for three days. She called the company to complain; they did not return her calls.

Another customer was an 89-year-old L.A. woman who lives alone. She responded to the same ad for \$49.95. After the operative 's intimidating tactics she was coerced into paying the company \$1,600.00.

The operation covered virtually all of Southern California. Their ads have appeared in coupon circulars as far apart as Ventura County, the Inland Empire, Orange County, and all parts of Los Angeles County.

Under the agreement reached with the Santa Monica City Attorney's office, Gilboa was sentenced to three years probation on the following terms:

1. He provided full refunds to all known customers, totaling more than \$20,000
2. He must perform 360 hours of hard labor community service
3. He is barred from any cleaning business in California
4. He must discontinue all telephone numbers and advertisements of the company, including (888)308-0608 and (866)552-5236.

Gilboa was convicted of four counts of grand theft and six counts of false advertising. The plea was taken July 21 at the LAX courthouse in Los Angeles.

This is a shameful scam, said Deputy City Attorney Adam Radinsky. The promise of carpet cleaning is just a ruse to get these bullies into people's homes. We caution everyone to use carpet cleaners only after verifying that the company is legitimate, with a real location, a local business license, and a good rating with the Better Business Bureau.