

Consumer Alert!

Traveling Sales Crews: What You Should Know

(NAPSA)—The next time an unexpected knock on your door turns up a young salesperson with a sympathy-worthy sales pitch, you might want to think twice about supporting what may be a traveling sales crew, says the National Consumers League (NCL). Alarming accounts of scams and dangers surrounding some door-to-door sales have prompted the nation's oldest consumer advocacy organization to warn consumers about the risks of patronizing traveling sales crews.

Traveling sales crews quickly sweep in and out of neighborhoods. Often falsely claiming to support programs to help kids or raise money for charity, these companies recruit children, teenagers and young adults to sell products such as magazine subscriptions, cleaning supplies and candy.

For many youths and young adults sucked into traveling sales crews, promises of high pay and nationwide travel turn into long hours of work with abuse and little or no pay. The salespeople are often required to turn their earnings over to the crew leaders, who dole out \$5 – \$10 a day for food.

Some sellers are forced to survive by scamming or stealing from their customers—or worse. Crew members have been convicted of serious crimes against their customers, such as rape and murder. More often than violence, however, consumers often find overpriced products, nondelivery of products, nonreceipt of refunds when requested and incomplete receipts that make canceling the orders impossible.



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How to spot a traveling sales crew? If your city requires a permit for residential sales, ask the seller to show his or her permit. Most traveling sales crews won't have one to show you.

If you're still not sure, ask the salesperson to return the next week. A traveling sales crew likely won't be in the area long enough, and this can buy you some time to check out the company.

NCL recommends that if you suspect a salesperson works in a traveling sales crew, don't let him into your house and don't buy his product. Call your local police. Give the police officer the name of the company and what is being sold.

NCL offers tips—available thanks to an unrestricted grant from the Direct Selling Education Foundation—to help consumers distinguish between a legitimate company and the scams of a traveling sales crew at www.nclnet.org.