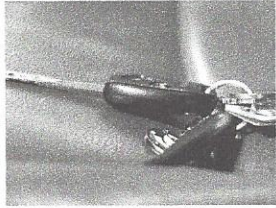


Don't fall victim to an unlicensed locksmith

Rebecca Lopez, WFAA 3:53 a.m. CST November 18, 2014

You are vulnerable to scams when locked out of your car or home



(Photo: WFAA)

Meridith Schucker is a busy mom on the go who recently locked herself out of her SUV.

"I was desperate because I needed to get back to Dallas to pick up my kids quickly from school," she said.

So, she used Google to look up a locksmith in Grand Prairie. She called the first name that popped up.

"They refused to give me a price; they said it would start at this price, and there is a service call for this price," Schucker recalled.

So she tried another locksmith, and again was not given a firm rate. Experts say that is a huge warning sign.

"A legitimate locksmith will always give you a price; he knows exactly what it takes to get into the car," said Adam Barron, who, as a locksmith, is licensed and regulated by the Texas Department of Public Safety.

SEARCH: [DPS database of licensed locksmiths \(http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/rsd/psb/psbSearch/company_search.aspx\)](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/rsd/psb/psbSearch/company_search.aspx)

He said unregulated companies will quote you a low price, and once they get your car or home unlocked, they'll increase the price to as much as \$300.

"Unlicensed companies, typically what they will do is they will unlock your vehicle and take your keys until they receive payment," Barron said.

He said there are more than 1,800 unregulated companies in Grand Prairie alone; some employ questionable people.



Be alert for unlicensed companies that claim to be legitimate locksmiths. Rebecca Lopez / WFAA

Legitimate companies have to do FBI background checks on employees, they have insurance and they carry a license.

"Most of the time, if you call a non-legitimate locksmith company and you ask for their license, they hang up on you," Barron said.

Meridith Schucker said she was easy prey because she was alone and needed help. But in the end, she didn't take the bait and found a legitimate company to unlock her car.

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