



NEWS RELEASE

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Attorney General's Office Participates in National Law Enforcement Initiative Against Deceptive Travel Promoters and Timeshare Resellers

PIERRE, S.D - Attorney General Marty Jackley announces South Dakota's participation in a joint multi-state, multi-national law enforcement initiative, coordinated by the Federal Trade Commission, to combat deceptive travel promoters and timeshare resellers.

Typically, deceptive timeshare resellers claim to have ready buyers or renters who will pay top dollar for consumers' timeshare properties and trick consumers into dishing out hefty up-front fees. The resellers falsely claim that they can rent or sell consumers' properties for a certain amount, although no buyers or renters are in place. Consumers ultimately end up losing hundreds or thousands of dollars in fraudulent closing costs and unsold properties. Many of these scammers also promise refunds to consumers, but most consumers never get their money back.

A similar deceptive practice involves promoters tricking consumers into purchasing deeply discounted or "free" vacation packages supposedly worth thousands of dollars; however, most consumers receive nothing of value or are required to attend lengthy high-pressure timeshare sales presentations.

To protect against these types of frauds, follow these tips:

Travel Scam Red Flags

- You "won a free vacation," but you have to pay some fees first.
- The prize company wants your credit card number.
- They cold-call, cold-text, or email you out of the blue. Before you do business with any company you don't know, verify with the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division.
- When they company cannot give you specifics about the trip.
- You get pressure to sign up for a travel club for great deals on future vacations.
- You get a robocall about it. Robocalls from companies are illegal if you haven't given a company written permission to call you; even if you haven't signed up for the national [Do Not Call Registry](#).

Tips to Avoid a Timeshare Resale Scam

- Check out the legitimacy of the company before you agree to anything.
- Deal only with licensed real estate brokers or agents.
- Get all terms in writing before you agree to anything.
- Consider doing business only with someone who gets paid after the timeshare is sold.

“A recent case involving 1st Choice Sales and Marketing, Inc. is a good example that this fraud exists in South Dakota,” said Jackley. “This is just part of the Attorney General’s continuing efforts to stop travel and timeshare scams and protect South Dakota consumers from fraud and deception in the marketplace.”

1st Choice Sales and Marketing, Inc. conducted sales presentations at a Sioux Falls hotel and enticed consumers with fraudulent travel vouchers promising airline vouchers promising airline tickets from an airline that was nonexistent. The two individuals representing this company, while in South Dakota, were convicted with failure to inform buyer of right to cancel.

If you have been a victim of this scam or would like additional information contact the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division as 1-800-300-1986 or consumerhelp@state.sd.us.