Security system monitoring company dinged for door-to-door deceptions

Local News

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SEATTLE – Door-to-door salespeople hawking home security monitoring services for Pinnacle Security, Inc. routinely said things that weren’t true, according to documents filed yesterday by the Washington State Attorney General’s Office.Some Pinnacle representatives said their services were free as long as customers put the company’s yard sign up. In some cases, Pinnacle salespeople said they worked for a homeowner’s existing security company or that Pinnacle had “taken over” the person’s existing service. Some said potential customers would not face cancelation fees if they ended their existing service and switched to Pinnacle.All of these claims were false. And according to Managing Assistant Attorney General Shannon Smith, who heads the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division, Pinnacle’s tactics were unfair and deceptive under the Washington State Consumer Protection Act.“When people fell for these dishonest tactics, they found themselves paying about $40 a month and stuck in a multi-year contract,” said Smith. “Pinnacle now agrees to stop its misleading practices and set aside $300,000 in restitution for those who have been harmed.”

Smith yesterday filed a complaint and consent decree in King County Superior Court. The deal, entered into with Utah-based Pinnacle, puts an end to the company’s misleading sales pitches. Restitution, which ranges from $100 to $300 per customer, is available through a claim form posted on the Attorney General’s Office’s website. Pinnacle will also provide the form upon request. The company agrees to pay $55,000 in penalties to the Attorney General’s Office, of which $20,000 is suspended as long as the company abides by the terms of yesterday’s agreement.This is not the first time state consumer protection attorneys have tangled with a security system company. In September, for example, Cencom, Inc. agreed to change marketing and billing practices after the Attorney General’s Office blasted the company’s “vague and misleading offers to lure customers” into signing up for security system monitoring.Both Cencom and Pinnacle deny the Attorney General’s allegations that their sales tactics violate consumer protection laws. Yet complaints about security system companies are quite familiar to the Attorney General’s Office.“Shop around,” says Smith to those who need home security monitoring. “Don’t buy from the first person who knocks on your door. If something is offered for free, get the details in writing. And call your existing security monitoring service and ask about cancelation fees before you agree to start a new service.”