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For more information: Jan Talley, Director, or Jane Page, Assistant Director
Business Tax Division, (605) 773-3311

Transient Vendors: Get the Facts Before You Buy

(PIERRE, SD) – Transient vendor season is beginning in South Dakota, a time when out-of-state vendors roll into the state to sell their products and services. While many of these vendors are legitimate, the South Dakota Department of Revenue and Regulation says there are common sense steps the public can take to ensure the vendor is reputable before deciding whether to do business with them.

If you're considering hiring a person to provide repair or construction services, the department advises you to:

- Ask for a price quote, in advance, in writing.
- Question the contractor as to whether they have a permanent address and telephone number, and don't assume that if the information they provide is local, they're a local business. Often transient vendors will have business cards printed with a local mailing service or motel address and telephone number.
- Ask for a list of local references and check them before making a decision.
- Ask if the contractor has workman's compensation and general liability insurance. If they're not properly insured, the homeowner may be liable for accidents that occur on the property.
- Be careful about paying for work in advance and before making final payments, make sure the transient vendors have paid their local suppliers. You as the customer may be held liable for unpaid material bills.
- Make sure you're completely satisfied with the work before paying the bill and don't pay more for the job than originally quoted unless you've given written approval for the additional work or cost.

Out-of-state vendors often travel to South Dakota to sell items like fruit, seafood, meat packages, paintings, magazine subscriptions, rugs, t-shirts, sunglasses, household cleaners, furniture, stuffed animals, and asphaltting and roofing services. Asking the right questions when approached by these vendors can help you avoid making a purchase you may regret:

- Question the salesperson about the product, warranties, guarantees, etc.
- Get something in writing with the company's name, address and phone number.
- Ask to see their current South Dakota tax license. State law requires all persons selling products or services to have a current South Dakota sales or contractors' excise tax license. To verify if the license is valid, call the Department's toll-free helpline at 1-800-829-9188.

If you have doubts about the vendor or think you may have been the victim of a scam, call your local police department or county sheriff's office immediately. Be prepared to give as much information as you can about the vendor including the name of the company and salesperson, company address and telephone number, and make, model and license number (if possible) of the vehicle the vendor was driving. Without tips from the public, law enforcement officials may not be able to catch illegal vendors before they move on to the next community.

For more information on transient vendors, contact the South Dakota Department of Revenue and Regulation's toll-free helpline at 1-800-829-9188.