

For Immediate Release:

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NEWARK – Acting Attorney General John J. Hoffman and the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs today kicked off National Consumer Protection Week, a consumer awareness campaign that runs during the first week of March, with a recap of New Jersey's [top 10 consumer complaint](#) categories from 2015.

Complaints about home improvement contractors and motor vehicle-related sales and repairs once again topped the list of formal complaints the Division of Consumer Affairs' Office of Consumer Protection received from consumers last year.

The formal complaints - 9,430 for the year – are separate from the 67,027 calls last year to the Division's Consumer Service Center hotline, many of which are resolved through various forms of mediation or are referred to other appropriate agencies.

Addressing complaints is just one of the many ways the Division of Consumer Affairs touches the lives of New Jersey's consumers.

"Whether warning consumers of criminal scams, alerting them to unsafe products, or regulating and licensing hundreds of thousands of professionals they do business with, the Division of Consumer Affairs works tirelessly to protect consumers and ensure a safe and fair marketplace," Division of Consumer Affairs Acting Director Steve Lee said. "It's a job we do every day, through innovative educational initiatives, the scrupulous oversight of our professional boards, and the robust review and investigation of consumer complaints."

Keeping with longstanding trends, "Home Improvement" issues, and "Motor Vehicles" complaints (which includes auto sales, auto repairs, and related matters) were #1 and #2 respectively on the Division's 2015 Top 10 complaints list. Coming in at #3 was the "Professional Services" category, which includes complaints about physicians, lawyers, accountants, medical labs, and other professions or businesses.

A category that saw an uptick in complaints last year was "Internet Sales," reflecting the increasing trend of consumers reaching out to companies that advertise, buy, and sell goods and services online. The Division responded to the increased complaints by cracking down on some of the biggest generators of internet sales complaints.

In June 2015, the Division filed complaints against the Englewood Cliffs-based Stanley Warranty LLC, which does business as Stanley Safe Club and its owner alleging the company defrauded consumers to whom it sold contracts for the repair and replacement of motor vehicles, and home systems and appliances.

The Division also implemented stricter controls over the business practices of internet sellers. In June 2015, the Edison-based CHW Group, which does business as Choice Home Warranty, agreed to pay the state \$779,914, including consumer restitution; revise its business practices; and retain a

compliance monitor for at least a year to resolve a civil action brought by the Division. In July 2015, the Fairfield -based Telebrands Corp., known for its "As Seen on TV" products, agreed to pay \$550,000 to the state and change its business practices to settle an action brought by the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General and the Division of Consumer Affairs.

The complete Top 10 consumer complaint categories list for 2015 is as follows:

1. Home Improvement Contractors
2. Motor Vehicles
3. Professional Services
4. Health Clubs
5. Internet Sales
6. Miscellaneous Scams
7. Banks/Financial Institutions
8. Internet Services
9. Cable TV/Subscriptions
10. Wireless Phones

National Consumer Protection Week (NCPW) is a coordinated campaign that encourages consumers nationwide to take full advantage of their consumer rights and make better-informed decisions. NCPW 2016 will take place March 6 through March 12, 2016. Additional information is available at www.NCPW.gov.

Consumers who believe they have been cheated or scammed by a business, or suspect any other form of consumer abuse, can file an [online complaint](#) with the State Division of Consumer Affairs by visiting its [website](#) or by calling 1-800-242-5846 (toll free within New Jersey) or 973-504- 6200.

Follow the Division of Consumer Affairs on [Facebook](#) , and check our online calendar of upcoming [Consumer Outreach](#) events.