

Dept. of Agriculture: Releases top ten consumer complaints for 2019

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MADISON – For the seventeenth year in a row, **Telemarketing** topped the list of consumer complaints received by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) in 2019, at 4,244 complaints. However, for the first time in a decade, the number of these complaints has dropped.

While this category still tops the complaint list, the decline may be a sign of more good news to come. The federal TRACED Act is designed to combat spoofed phone numbers by requiring that telephone companies in the U.S. match the caller ID and origin numbers. This will alert consumers to potential scam calls before they even pick up the phone.

Landlord/Tenant complaints held steady at the second spot with 1,128 complaints. These were primarily related to issues with security deposits, evictions, and unauthorized entry.

Many disputes between landlords and tenants can be avoided if both parties understand their legal rights and responsibilities. DATCP's Guide for Landlords and Tenants is intended to help landlords and tenants avoid common problems and resolve them when they do occur: <https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Publications/-LandlordTenantGuide.aspx>

Further down the list, **Identify Theft** (228 complaints) remains at number six. Complaints on this topic primarily revolved around fraud, tax identity theft, misuse of Social Security numbers and unauthorized account access. Although these complaints did not increase in 2019, identity theft can still have devastating effects for those who experience it.

In an effort to address data security challenges facing consumers and businesses in Wisconsin, DATCP created the Data Privacy and Security Advisory Committee in 2019. Following a series of meetings, the committee will make recommendations in the summer of 2020 on possible law and policy changes. The department encourages the public to submit public comments to the committee by emailing DATCPDataAdvisory@wisconsin.gov.

“We realize how stressful it can be to navigate an issue with a business, but you don’t have to do it alone,” said Lara Sutherlin, Administrator for DATCP’s Division of Trade and Consumer Protection. “Whether it’s through our website, our Consumer Protection Hotline, or our mediation team, DATCP is here to serve as a resource if you need help.”

To file a complaint or find additional resources and information, consumers can visit DATCP’s Bureau of Consumer Protection at <https://datcp.wi.gov>, call the Consumer Protection Hotline at 1-800-422-7128 or send an e-mail to datcphotline@wi.gov. You can also connect with the bureau on Facebook at www.facebook.com/wiconsumer or Twitter: @wiconsumer.

The top ten PRODUCT categories are:

Rank in 2019	Product/Problem	#of Complaints
1	Telemarketing (No-Call & Scams)	4,244
2	Landlord/Tenant	1,128
3	Telecommunications	686
4	Home Improvement	507
5	Medical Services	299
6	Identity Theft	228
7	Motor Vehicle Repair	196
8	Motor Vehicle Sales (New & Used)	141
9	Gas Pumps	119
10	Computer & Equipment	102

Total number of complaints recorded in 2019 (BCP & BWM): 10,994