

Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: Aids Wisconsin consumers: Top ten consumer complaints in 2021

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MADISON, Wis. – As the State’s largest consumer protection agency, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) receives tens of thousands of requests for assistance, information, and resources each year. In 2021, the Bureau of Consumer Protection (BCP) worked to resolve more than 11,750 consumer complaints filed with DATCP, successfully reached settlements in several ongoing investigations, and returned more than \$11,151,000 to Wisconsin consumers.

“The Bureau of Consumer Protection serves as a vital resource for both consumers and businesses,” said DATCP Secretary Randy Romanski. “DATCP is proud of the BCP staff who investigate consumer complaints, mediate successful resolutions to complicated consumer concerns, create valuable resources, and provide training opportunities for consumers and businesses on contractor agreements, scams, and identity theft.”

These are the top ten complaint categories for consumer complaints received by DATCP in 2021.

1. Telemarketing (2,765 complaints)

Telemarketing complaints continue to be the top consumer concern in Wisconsin. While the number of complaints dropped for the third year in a row, consumers are still faced with many issues surrounding unwanted calls and texts. DATCP continues

to educate consumers on how to spot a fraudulent phone call or text in order to prevent becoming the victim of a scam. Telecommunications issues reported to DATCP include imposter scams, robocalls, and 'Do Not Call List' violations.

2. Landlord-Tenant (1,678 complaints)

Returning to the number two position, landlord-tenant complaints remained a critical concern for Wisconsinites. In addition to complaints, the DATCP website saw more than 100,000 visits to rental resources including 65,000 visits to the Landlord-Tenant COVID-19 FAQ webpage and 50,000 visits to the Landlord-Tenant Guide webpage.

3. Identity Theft (1,550)

Fraud reports are on the rise nationally, and Wisconsin has followed that trend with identity theft complaints shifting up one position in 2021. BCP works to help victims who report identity theft recover and secure their identity against further fraud. Since identity recovery after fraud is a time-consuming and expensive task, BCP also works to educate consumers on prevention. Throughout 2021, outreach staff presented to more than 4,500 individuals on identity theft and other important consumer protection topics.

4. Home Improvement (580)

Top consumer home improvement concerns in 2021 included lien waivers, non-fulfillment of services, billing disputes, and workmanship issues.

5. Telecommunications (573)

Disputes with telecommunications companies continued to be a concern for many Wisconsinites, but overall the category dropped two places in the ranking. Consumers reported issues such as billing disputes, misleading advertisements, and termination of services as principal concerns.

6. Medical Service (273)

Consumers reported billing disputes, unsatisfactory services, and misleading representations as top concerns in the medical services category.

7. Motor Vehicle Repair (218)

Workmanship, failure to honor warranties, damage, and unsatisfactory service were the primary concerns in the motor vehicle repair category.

8. Motor Vehicle Sales (194)

DATCP saw consumer reports of misleading representations and inadequate disclosures related to motor vehicle sales.

9. Motor Vehicle Accessories and Parts (180)

As part of a trend of rising motor vehicle concerns, the motor vehicle accessories and parts category appeared in the top ten for the first time. Consumers reported delivery failure, misleading representations, and unsatisfactory refund policies as their main concerns.

10. Entertainment and Recreation (140)

While rescheduled and canceled events continued to be a concern for consumers in 2021, DATCP received 141 fewer complaints on this topic than in the prior year. In 2021, DATCP was able to reach beneficial resolutions to many of its 2020 complaints resulting in several settlements with restitution going back to distressed consumers including:

- Reaching a settlement with Voyageurs International, Ltd. and returning \$636,500 to 335 Wisconsin consumers for payments made for the company's 2020 European tour.
- Collaborating in a multistate agreement to settle with Brown Paper Tickets, requiring the company to make owed payments to event organizers and refunds to ticket buyers.
- Working with the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) to reach a settlement with StubHub to issue refunds to more than 8,663 Wisconsin event-goers whose events were canceled.

"BCP staff proudly serve Wisconsin consumers when they need assistance," said Lara Sutherlin, Administrator of the Division of Trade and Consumer Protection. "By providing education, mediating complaints, and investigating potential violations of Wisconsin's consumer protection laws, we assist thousands of Wisconsin consumers to reach a satisfactory resolution to business disagreements."

If you need assistance, to file a complaint, or to find additional resources and



information visit DATCP's Bureau of Consumer Protection at www.datcp.wi.gov, call the Consumer Protection Hotline at (800) 422-7128, or send an e-mail to datcphotline@wi.gov.