

# OFFICE EFFICIENCY

## Protecting Your Organization From Fraud

(NAPSA)—It may pay for businesses and other organizations to answer the following question: Could we be the victims of an office supply scam? If a group doesn't have adequate purchasing controls, the answer is probably yes.

Bogus office supply firms scam businesses, churches and fraternal and charitable organizations out of millions of dollars every year. The typical scam involves goods or services that a group routinely orders, such as copier paper, maintenance supplies, classified advertising, etc. Fraudulent telemarketers will call an organization and lie to get it to pay for items it didn't order, or to get it to pay more than it agreed to for the goods.

The office supplies peddled by these bogus firms are often overpriced and of poor quality and the services usually are worthless.

To protect your business or organization from being taken for a ride, try these tips:

- Know your rights—If you receive bills for goods and services you didn't order, don't pay. The law allows you to treat unordered goods and services as a gift.

- Review company phone bills as soon as they arrive—Be on the lookout for charges for goods and services you haven't ordered or authorized.

- Assign purchasing to designated staff—Also, document all purchases.

- Train staff in how to respond to telemarketers—Advise employees who are not authorized to order goods and services to say, "I'm not authorized to place



**Organizations can save money by avoiding "office supply scams."**

orders. If you want to offer or sell us something, you must speak to \_\_\_\_\_."

- Buy from people you know and trust—Authorized employees should be skeptical of "cold" or unsolicited calls and feel comfortable saying "no" to high pressure sales tactics. Check out the supplier with the Attorney General or Better Business Bureau in your state or the state where the company is located before you send any money for any product or service. This is prudent, but not foolproof: there may be no record of complaints if an organization is too new or has changed its name.

If you think your organization has been victimized, contact the Federal Trade Commission. Complaints can be filed by contacting the Consumer Response Center by phone: 1-877-FTC-HELP; by mail: Consumer Response Center, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20580; or at [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov).