

# Tips can help protect vulnerable adults from getting scammed

Dear Attorney General Kline:  
*Despite my efforts to convince them otherwise, my elderly parents insist on living by themselves. I'm concerned that they may become the targets of various scam artists. Can you provide me some tips I might share with them for their protection?*



## Phill Kline

### • Consumer Corner

Dear Kansas Consumer:  
One of my top priorities after taking office was to establish the Vulnerable Adults Task Force (VATF) in July of 2003 within my Consumer Protection Division. The VATF seeks to protect Kansas' senior citizens and persons with disabilities from consumer fraud and exploitation through education, in-

vestigation, and prosecution.

Here's a list of tips to assist vulnerable adults and protect them from scammers:

- Register your home and cell phones on the Kansas and national do-not-call list by calling toll-free 1-888-382-1222.

You should notice a considerable decrease in the number of calls you

receive three months after you register.

- Never have your social security number or your driver's license number pre-printed on your checks or other documents to which others may gain access. Guard credit card and checking account information as you do the keys to your house.
- Closely scrutinize all credit card

and bank statements for charges that have been applied to your account without your permission. If you discover such charges, call 785-296-2424, select category 7, then push #3 and #4 for more information.

- Order your free credit report each year and review it closely. To do this you can call 1-877-322-8228 or log onto [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com).

- Request removal of your name from direct mail solicitations by writing to: Mail Preference Service, P. O. Box 643, Carmel, NY 10512,

- Research charitable organizations before you donate. Call 785-296-2424, select category 8, then

push #5 for more information.

- Check out the complaint resolution history of a company or charitable organization with your local Better Business Bureau. The three Kansas BBB numbers are (316) 263-3146 (Wichita), (785) 232-0454 (Topeka) and (816) 421-7800 (Kansas City).

- Consider posting "No Trespassing" and "No Soliciting" signs near your property entrances. Immediately point them out to solicitors and call the police when the signs are disregarded.

- Never place bank statements, credit card information or any sensitive financial or personal information in the trash without first shredd-

ding or defacing the material.

- Be wary of whom you assign power of attorney; much fraud and financial abuse starts with trusted family members. Only sign power of attorney forms that have been approved by an attorney hired to represent your interests.

- Inform your bank that Attorney General Phill Kline participated in a video titled "Preventing Elder Financial Exploitation: How Banks Can Help" and ask the bank manager to use that tape to train bank tellers on elder abuse.

- Call the Adult Protective Services Hotline to report the abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult at (800) 922-5330.

Our mission is to protect those who have given so much from those who would steal as much as they could. That's why I formed the Vulnerable Adults Task Force and why we make justice for vulnerable adults a top priority.

Attorney General Phill Kline offers this public service to help you avoid becoming a victim of consumer fraud. Although some of the details have been changed, the cases appearing in this column are based on actual complaints or questions. For further information or to file a complaint, please write Attorney General Phill Kline, Consumer Protection Division, 120 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, Kansas 66612, or call the toll-free Consumer Hotline, 1-800-432-2310.

## Heavy rains mean pumpkin patch problems in Massachusetts

MONSON, Mass. (AP) — Leaves are beginning to change on the sugar maples that tower over the stone walls near Westview Farms, but there's something missing from this New England autumn scene: the pumpkins.

Instead of countless pumpkins covering Westview's pick-your-own pumpkin fields, weeds have taken over the land.

The \$20,000 that farmer Dave Bradway spent planting pumpkins in mid-June may as well be rotting in the earth with the seeds ruined by too much rain.

"This time of year, you're sup-

posed to see nothing but orange. Solid orange," Bradway said recently as he surveyed 53 acres of what he called a "total crop failure."

Massachusetts farmers and agriculture experts said as much as half of the state's pumpkin crop may have been washed away by heavy rains in May and June.

"Some fields were so wet that the seeds didn't germinate," said Ruth Hazzard, a vegetable specialist at the University of Massachusetts Extension Agriculture and Landscape program. "Some farmers couldn't plant at all because it was too wet."

The National Agricultural Statistics Service, which keeps records of annual crop yields, won't have an official tally for this year's pumpkin production for several months. In 2005, the agency reported that Massachusetts pumpkin patches yielded about 9,300 pounds per acre.

Gerald Tillman, a deputy director for the service, based in Concord, N.H., said Massachusetts farmers seem to have been the worst hit in New England. Other crops, like corn and potatoes, were hurt by the rain, but nowhere near as badly as pumpkins, Tillman said.

"I've heard from farmers saying they didn't have one vine that produced a pumpkin," he said.

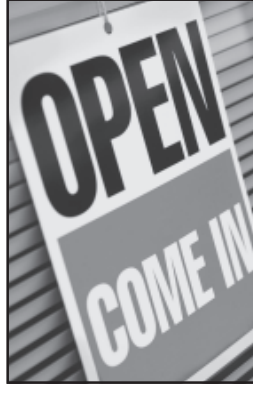
But those seeking the perfect pumpkins to carve into jack-o'-lanterns or puree into pie filling shouldn't notice a shortage.

"There are plenty of pumpkins for us to buy from New York, Canada and Ohio and sell on our own farms," said Rich Bonanno, whose pumpkin crop was washed out in Methuen. "The public is really disconnected from the food supply. They see pumpkins at the farm stand and think they're from that farm."

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