

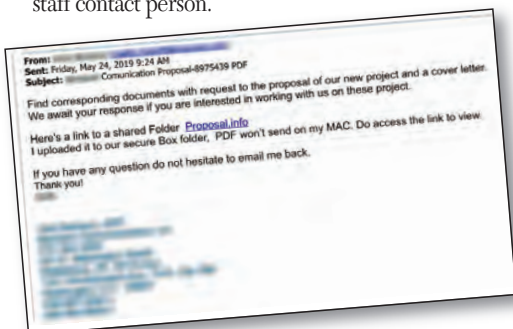


Phony RFP Proposal Emails Target Business Owners

by Dr. John D'Ambrosio, *President/CEO,*
Better Business Bureau of Coastal Carolina

If you are a business owner, you always have an eye out for your next contract. Receiving a "request for proposal" or RFP could be a way to win a new client. And now, unfortunately, it may also be a scam. Gone are the days when you can open an email without and answer it without a possible hack or scam. Now, scammers are sending RFP emails that use the names and info of real companies in hopes of fooling you, the business owner.

Here is how the scam works. You get an email with the subject "Communication Proposal PDF" or something similarly generic. The message appears to be from a potential client asking you to download the RFP and submit a bid on a new project. The email may even have the company's signature block with a real address and staff contact person.



huge red flag. Scammers often make excuses such as being "out of the country."

Get outside confirmation. Scammers often pose as government agencies or use real company names. Check that the RFP is posted on the organization's website. If the company doesn't list RFPs online, call their office to confirm. But do not use a link or phone number provided in the potentially phony message.

Be cautious of generic RFPs. Scammers try to cast a wide net by including little specific information in their fake emails. Always be wary of messages and project descriptions that are overly broad.

Don't believe what you see. Just because an email looks real, it doesn't mean it is. Scammers can fake anything from a company logo to the "Sent" email address.

It's hard enough to be successful in today's ever-changing business world. With the scammer's attacking from all sides, it's even tougher. For more resources, you can always contact us at BBB. You can also check out another resource, the Federal Trade Commission, (FTC.gov/SmallBusiness) from the Federal Trade Commission on cyber security and protecting your company from scams.

If you've been the victim of an RFP scam, use your experience to help others avoid falling prey by reporting it at the BBB.org/ScamTracker. We use your scam information to alert businesses and consumers about which scams are happening in your area, as well as provide information to local law enforcement and federal enforcement agencies.

About the BBB: The Better Business Bureau of Coastal Carolina is located at 1121 Third Ave., in Conway, SC and covers the counties of Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Georgetown, Horry, Marion, and Williamsburg in South Carolina and Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Cumberland, New Hanover, Pender, Robeson, and Sampson in North Carolina. For more information about becoming an Accredited Business, call 843-488-2227 or <https://www.bbb.org/myrtle-beach/accreditation-application>.

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SECURITY – HOME AUTOMATION ACCESSIBILITY EQUIPMENT

Selecting The Proper Security / Home Automation & Accessibility Equipment Across The Grand Strand

by Sara Sobota

Working with the proper qualified industry professionals to make informed decisions on the best security & home automation before & during the construction process is essential to long term peace of mind. The professionals at Security Vision and Port City Elevator have been in the security, home automation and accessibility equipment industry for many years. Both companies have earned the reputation for being industry leaders in their fields of expertise. Planning the installation of the appropriate security system and accessibility equipment to meet your future needs early in the process pays huge dividends towards your future peace of mind and the likelihood that you and your loved ones can enjoy your home or business for many years to come.



Security Vision owner, Michele Weissman, & Field Operations Manager, Ryan Keefe in the showroom.

Michele Weissman, who established Security Vision in 2004, keeps one eye on the technology market and one eye on the needs of her clients. She's knowledgeable on the latest products and upgrades, yet she also understands how to create customized service and product

packages, whether her client is a homeowner, a builder, or a property management company.

For homeowners, Security Vision's offerings range from security systems to smart home systems to home theaters and whole-house sound. Builders benefit from the

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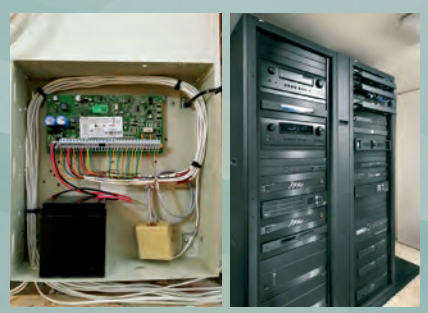
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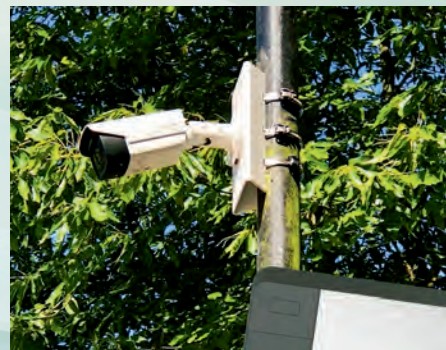
alarm systems, and Weissman emphasizes that explaining options to clients is a key part of her job.



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pre-structured wiring, cameras and full home automation that her company provides. For property management companies, Security Vision can take care of access control to the clubhouse, gym and other amenities as well as security at entrance gates and more. Security systems for either homes or larger properties can range from cameras to video doorbells to door locks to

“It’s all about education – providing the right product for the right solution. Everybody’s situation is a little bit different, so their needs are different, and that’s important. I just came from a job that I could have completed in a half hour, but I was there an hour and a half. I’d rather spend the time to make sure I’m giving them the right solution,



Security Vision works with several local Property Management Companies to install their security cameras and key pads to access gated communities.



the right camera, and the right price that fits their needs and figuring out what works best for their situation as well as their wallet.”



Weissman noted that do-it-yourself cameras and automation devices are now available at big-box retailers, and for some purposes they work well, but often, homeowners

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buy them and then realize they need help to install and incorporate them into their network.

“For that same investment, we can put in our equipment, service it and stand behind it,” said Weissman. “We can offer a 12-month, interest-free option to buy the same and better products professionally installed so you will always have a working system.”

Security Vision also offers Clare Controls, a new hub within the

do and some don’t,” said Weissman. “You want a one-touch goodnight scene button that says, ‘At night time, I want to arm the system, turn off the lights, shut the garage door, adjust the thermostat, and lock the doors’ – you want everything to work together from one app. We offer this hub to builders at a very low cost to be able to offer smart home solutions, and their customers don’t have to sign any contracts or pay any monthly fees.”

Security Vision also offers a showroom where builders and homeowners can see, hear, and use equipment before it’s installed in their homes. Being a local company, Weissman emphasizes the flexibility and customization of services Security Vision can offer, with monthly, no-

contract plans and “12 months no interest/no financing” for homeowners.

“I work with people, because I want the customer to have the option that works best for them. A happy customer that gets good service at a fair price is the best customer.”

For ease of movement and full accessibility at home or at work, Port City Elevator provides the products, services, and solutions to make mobility convenient and hassle-free.

Port City Elevator, established by Seth Newman and Robert Page in



Seth Newman

January 2013, installs and services elevators and accessibility equipment such as wheelchair lifts, stair lifts, and platform lifts. The company serves

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both residential and commercial markets in the Grand Strand area, including existing homes as well as new construction, and light commercial jobs for churches, private clubs, schools, or restaurants.

Homeowners are considering the



Port City Elevator Regional Manager, Stan Godshall

future when designing their homes, said Newman, seeking features that offer convenience as residents' needs change.

"Let's say you're a fit 35 year-old that uses the elevator to take groceries to an upper floor kitchen," said Newman. "Maybe that fit 35-year-old broke an ankle playing



Stan Godshall (left) reviews the ease of operation for the Stiltz Lift with homeowner, Bill White. Bill and his wife Pat are very pleased with their experience with Port City Elevator and their decision to have the Stiltz Lift installed in their existing home in Tidewater Plantation. The existing structure could not accommodate a traditional elevator shaft, so the Stiltz Lift was a welcomed option to meet their needs.

tennis, so then they have the elevator if the stairs present some type of challenge on a temporary basis. But then, down the road, if there's an

long as they can," said Newman, "so they want to make different provisions to allow them to decide when they leave the house versus the



The Stiltz Lift can be controlled remotely. This is very convenient if the homeowner needs to bring something to the 2nd or 3rd floor without the use of the stairs. Once the Stiltz Lift is moved all the way down, this creates extra floor space which can support the weight of an individual.

illness or something like that, they're set for it."

Other homeowners consider elevators and accessibility features in order to have more control over their long-term residential decisions.

"More people are moving into the Grand Strand area, and they want to try to stay in the house as

house telling them, "This isn't a good fit for you any more."

As the industry evolves, Newman



Homeowner's Bill and Pat White are still able to access their closet downstairs when the Stiltz Lift is moved to the 2nd floor.

said, the image of the elevator is changing.

"The market is growing, and people are becoming more aware that elevators are not just for million dollar houses," said Newman. "We do plenty of elevators that are in a one-story, \$300,000 house that's elevated 15 feet in the air on pilings."

Newman emphasized that the time to consider an elevator is during the building process, which is usually well before accessibility is an issue.

"Maybe a 40- or 50-year old couple is building a house, but they're starting to think about the future. They've thought, 'Wow, mom and dad really have a hard time with stairs

where they live right now, so let's go ahead and at least incorporate a space for an elevator shaft and make some provisions.' It's just a little bit of construction work while they're building the house, and then in five or ten years, when they really need the elevator, the space is allotted for it, and it's a lot more economical than adding an elevator shaft after the fact."

Newman wants to ensure that all clients

understand their options and select a product that will fit their needs. Thus, Port City Elevator offers a showroom with two elevators, a wheelchair lift, and a pneumatic vacuum elevator – a round tube that operates on air – where clients can see, touch, and ride the products before choosing and installing them.



With all of their solutions and all of their clients, Port City Elevator emphasizes that education and preparation is the key to extending the convenience and satisfaction of residential living. ■



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