

**INSTITUTE OF INSPECTION, CLEANING
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AVOIDING THE CARPET CLEANING SCAM
HOW TO SELECT A PROFESSIONAL CARPET CLEANER**

“Cleaning Carpet Can Be a Dirty Business” “Not All Scum Is In the Carpet” “Don’t Let them Pull The Rug Out From Under You” “Clean Your Carpets Without Cleaning Out Your Wallet” “Don’t Get Taken To The Cleaners”. These clever phrases have appeared recently in newspaper articles and televised consumer news programs across the nation warning consumers about carpet cleaning scam operations. The media has related horror stories of trusting consumers who have responded to low-price carpet cleaning specials only to become victims of unethical cleaners who refuse to honor the advertised price, intimidate the consumers, and do poor quality work.

Bait-and-switch operators are prevalent in many industries, and the carpet cleaning industry is no exception. This does not mean that all carpet cleaners are rip-off artists. How do you know who is and who is not? The professional carpet cleaning industry has cited these scam activities as a major industry concern and is taking action to help eliminate unprofessional workmanship and unethical tactics. One of the leaders in this campaign is the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC), an international, nonprofit organization that certifies cleaners who meet prescribed levels of technical proficiency and pledge to operate by a Code of Ethics.

To help educate consumers so they will not become victims of fraudulent practices within the cleaning industry, the IICRC has released a list of guidelines to consider when selecting a carpet cleaner.

Price – If an advertised price sounds too good to be true – it is! Often carpet cleaners advertise a low price just to get their foot in the door. Use common sense, a low price usually equates to low

quality for any product or service. Legitimate business people have legitimate expenses they must cover, including license, taxes, insurance, employee wages, and benefits, and quality tools of the trade. A professional carpet cleaner who must cover all of these business expenses and make a profit to stay in the business cannot afford to drive to your house for \$5.95, much less clean a room of carpet when there.

Quality - Never should the price of cleaning services be the sole criterion for selecting a carpet cleaner. A price that sounds high may not be a signal of a rip-off. In all professions, quality work deserves a quality price.

Truth in Advertising – Read the fine print in advertised specials to find out exactly what the price includes, and request a firm price in writing before the work begins.

Training - Professional cleaning firms require management and employees to engage in formal training in a variety of cleaning disciplines, and these educational efforts will be ongoing. Consumers should ask about the formal training background of technicians who will be cleaning their carpet.

Certification – Professional firms require Certification of technicians through such certification organizations as the IICRC or through comparable franchise or independent training and testing organizations.

Experience – The years of experience a firm has, combined with formal training programs, contribute significantly to the experience and proficiency of its employees.

Knowledgeable Professional firms employ and train technicians who have the ability to answer basic questions regarding carpe performance and maintenance, as well as spotting and cleaning.

References Consumers should ask for references from previous customers, and they should consult friends and business acquaintances about the reputation of the cleaning firm they are considering. Do not hesitate to call the Chamber of Commerce and the Better Business Bureau.

Trade Associations Professional cleaning firms are members of regional or national trade

associations or other organizations that promote high ethical standards and continuing education.

Look for trade association logos in advertising.

Credibility – Community involvement through the Chamber of Commerce and/or professional business, charitable, or similar organizations will be undertaken by concerned, caring professionals. Look for logos indicating involvement in these organizations.

Cleaning Standard – Ask if the cleaner is operating according to the IICRC S001-Cleaning Standards. Request to see a copy of this industry-prescribed document.

Method – Ask the cleaner which method of cleaning will be used and the advantages and disadvantages of this method compared to other methods.

Proof – Never hesitate to ask for proof. Ask to see the cleaner's certification card, business license, and insurance certificate.

No Pressure – Technicians must be courteous and willing to take the time to thoroughly explain the cleaning and to answer all questions. The consumer should never feel pressured.

There is no single criterion for selecting a carpet cleaning service. Several combined factors must be considered in the selection decision. If you wish to locate a Certified cleaner in your service area, you may call the IICRC Referral System 1-800-835-4624.