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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BEWARE OF HOME IMPROVEMENT SCAM ARTISTS

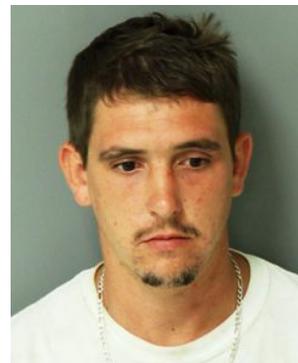
WAKE FOREST, NC – July 24, 2012 – The Wake Forest Police Department is reminding area residents to be on the lookout for home improvement scam artists after two men recently attempted to con a local elderly man.

On Saturday, July 21, police arrested Charles R. Barnes, Jr., 8107 Speights Chapel Road, Whitakers, and Travis K. Tyndall, 64 Rabbit Lane, Rocky Mount, after the two men tried to force the senior citizen to agree to unnecessary roof repairs.

According to police, the elderly man was in his front yard Saturday afternoon when a white truck operated by Barnes, 28, and Tyndall, 27, stopped in the roadway. The two men said they noticed a gutter drain pipe that was not securely fastened to the house and offered to fix it for \$25. After consenting to the gutter pipe repair, the elderly man noticed Barnes and Tyndall on his roof. A short time later, Barnes told the man they had discovered a hole in his roof that they were going to repair for \$525. Moments later, the man heard saws running and watched as the two men cut a hole in the roof. By the time police arrived, Barnes and Tyndall had removed approximately 40 feet of roofing from the elderly man's house exposing the rafters, insulation, and other parts of the structure.

Both subjects were charged with obtaining property by false pretense, conspiracy to commit obtaining property by false pretense, and injury to real property in the amount of \$30,000. Tyndall, who was also processed on two related outstanding warrants, received a \$94,000 secured bond, while Barnes received a \$63,000 secured bond.

Police say Saturday's incident is not uncommon since home improvement scams typically target elderly citizens and take place during the spring and summer. In many cases, scam



artists drive through neighborhoods looking to find people in their yards. Once spotted, the victim is drawn into a conversation about work that needs to be done on their home and then offered a "bargain" home repair.

The National Association of Bunco Investigators (NABI) says to beware any time a repairperson knocks on your door and suggests you look out for the following telltale signs:

- The repairperson drives an unmarked truck or van with an out-of-state license.
- Only rarely will legitimate home improvement companies solicit door-to-door. They usually distribute fliers or make phone calls since it's more cost-effective for them.
- The worker has no business identification, local address or telephone number. Always request identification so that you can call the company for verification.
- You are offered a "special price" if you sign that day. Honest home contractors don't pressure customers to sign a contract or job order immediately.
- Beware of excuses such as, "We just finished a job around the corner and had extra materials that we could offer you at a discounted price." Professional companies do not operate in that manner.
- The worker asks for upfront costs or fees, or accepts only cash. Reputable contractors do not ask for all the money upfront. A customer pays one third of the bill first, then another third midway through the job, and the rest when the work is completed. Never pay in cash. Using a check keeps a record of the transaction and often provides identification of the person cashing the check.
- No written estimates or contracts are offered. If you have no contract, you have no recourse if the job is faulty or is never completed.
- The worker has no references. Ask for references and check around the neighborhood to see if anyone has contracted with this person to do work on their home.
- Scam artists also like to intimidate their prey. After a job is finished, usually with inferior materials and shoddy work, the man or woman will inform the customer that more money is owed. When the customer objects, he or she is told that the materials used were stolen and the police will be brought in if the higher price isn't paid.
- Compare estimates with other licensed contractors when you decide to have work done on your home. Don't give it to some "fly by night" contractor.

If you suspect that the person at your door is a scam artist, contact the Wake Forest Police Department at (919) 556-9111.

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For more information about the Town of Wake Forest, contact Public Information Officer Bill Crabtree at (919) 435-9421 or bcrabtree@wakeforestnc.gov.