

# National TV AGAIN

## “INSIDE EDITION” EXPOSES GARAGE DOOR REPAIR SCAMMERS



Guerrero interviews Cimmino in the garage.



By Tom Wadsworth, CDDC  
Senior Correspondent

I have bad news and good news.

The bad: Garage door repair rip-off artists were again exposed on national TV.

The good: The investigation revealed fewer rip-off artists than before.

### What appeared on TV

On Sept. 16, 2019, “Inside Edition” (IE) broadcast a 4-1/2-minute investigative report, titled “Will Garage Door Repairmen Be Able to Find a Simple Fix? Inside Edition Puts Them to the Test.” IE rigged a detached garage in Montclair, N.J., with many hidden cameras and one problem: an unaligned photo-eye.

Two industry experts, Andrew Cimmino of Christie Overhead Door in Staten Island, N.Y., and Mark McManus of Door Boy in Berkeley Heights, N.J., confirmed to IE that the only problem with the garage door system was the unaligned photo-eye.

IE’s Chief Investigative Correspondent Lisa Guerrero then called eight door companies to fix the problem. Of the eight, only two attempted to scam the customer.

A company named “Garage Door Repair” claimed, “The gear ... is about to break, and the sensors are dead.” They wanted \$720 for the “repair.”

Then, a company called Fast Local Garage Doors cited an “electrical problem” that would cost \$475. The Fast Local tech dropped the price to \$400, adding, “If you do cash, (there’s) no tax.”

That’s the story in a nutshell.

### What you didn’t see on TV

As with any 4-minute, heavily edited TV news report, there is an extensive backstory behind the broadcast story. Here are some details that you might otherwise not know.

First, this story’s producer was Charlie McLravy, who was also the producer of the Rossen Reports segment called “How honest are garage door repairmen? Hidden cameras put some to the test,” which aired on NBC’s “Today Show” on Dec. 3, 2014. In that story, three out of four door techs attempted to scam the customer. One of them even urinated on the customer’s lawn.

### Finding the experts

For the NBC story in 2014, McLravy used Mark McManus and Andy Pomroy of Albuquerque as the experts. The setup for the

new “Inside Edition” hidden-camera sting was remarkably similar to the one in the 2014 story, and it also used two experts.

This time around, McLravy first contacted Andy Pomroy in Albuquerque, but Pomroy referred him to McManus, since he was in New Jersey.

“When I learned that they were using a house in Montclair, I recommended getting Andrew Cimmino involved,” said McManus. “Montclair is in my market, which created a conflict of interest. But Andrew doesn’t do any business in Montclair.”

McLravy told us that he was pleased with McManus and Cimmino, citing “their excellent reputations and credentials in the New York and New Jersey area.” (See “The experts” on page 42.)

### Setting up the sting

The IE shoot took place on Aug. 8-9, after the site had been prepared on Aug. 5. The experts installed some new hinges and tweaked the springs. The operator was a 1994 unit, but both experts verified that all its components were fine.

The garage was detached from the home. From the control room in the house, all activity could be monitored. Since McManus might have been recognized by the visiting techs, he remained in the control room when techs came to the premises.

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**-CIMMINO**

### Finding the bad guys

“We actually had a hard time finding guys who were doing the wrong thing,” said Cimmino. “Only two of eight tried to rip them off. It didn’t make good television, but it was a good thing for the industry.”

Those six companies never knew—or found out—that they were being taped. Among the techs who appropriately fixed the problem were technicians from local Montclair small companies as well as the local Sears and Precision franchises.

### Two bad apples

Neither Cimmino nor McManus were familiar with the two companies (Garage Door Repair and Fast Local Garage Doors) that tried to scam the customer. Even though Montclair has a population of only 40,000, it sits in a densely populated area only six miles from Newark and 13 miles from New York City. Dozens of door companies—from New Jersey or New York—might attempt to service that area.

“Those two companies were blatantly trying to rip off the homeowner,” said McManus. “The work they proposed was not required.”

When these techs went into the garage, Cimmino, McManus, and Guerrero watched them from the control room and heard them talking. One of the two techs from Fast Local

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The experts:  
McManus and Cimmino.





Lisa Guerrero, IE's award-winning investigative reporter.



Charlie McLravy, IE producer

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poked around the belongings in the garage, found a jewelry box, and opened it. The box actually had a hidden camera in it, but he didn't realize it and put it down.

"It's so brazen to open up the customer's stuff," said Cimmino.

### Confronting the scammer

After these techs reported that costly repairs were required, they set out to do the work. That's when Lisa Guerrero came charging out, flanked by a cameraman, soundman, and Cimmino.

"My heart was pounding a mile a minute," said Cimmino. "I'm a very nonconfrontational person."

However, Guerrero handled the confrontation with the techs, saying, "Weren't you trying to rip me off just now?"

Cimmino said that Guerrero wanted him by her side but told him not to interject unless needed. He was fully ready to challenge the techs, but both companies quickly packed up and drove off after being confronted.

### "Cash ... no tax!"

When the Fast Local tech offered to cut his \$475 price tag down to "\$400 ... cash—no tax," Cimmino's and McManus's ears perked up.

"That's not legal," said Cimmino, "not even a little bit. The IRS would be all over that."

McManus urged IE to make sure that they kept the "no tax" statement in the final edit of the broadcast. They did.

### Guerrero's gift

Guerrero's performance is noteworthy. It takes a healthy amount of chutzpah for a reporter to jam a microphone in the face of a tech as they're trying to overcharge her.

**THE GARAGE DOOR EPISODE EARNED A 3.1 RATING, ATTRACTING OVER THREE MILLION VIEWERS. SINCE THE BROADCAST, THE STORY ON YOUTUBE HAS GAINED AN ADDITIONAL 3.0 MILLION VIEWS ... AND COUNTING.**

"She's phenomenal at what she does," said Cimmino. "She confronts people right up in their face; she knows what to say and how to say it."

### Millions watching

Some might assume that, since "Inside Edition" isn't a network broadcast, it has few viewers. Not true. The show is broadcast throughout the country and is the nation's longest-running syndicated newsmagazine program that is not focused on entertainment news.

The garage door episode earned a 3.1 rating, attracting over three million viewers. Since the broadcast, the story on YouTube has gained an additional 3.0 million views ... and counting.

### Tracking down the scammers

We tried to contact the two companies that were exposed on camera. But we did not get a response from either company.

We found a company called Fast Local Garage Door Services in Philadelphia, 100 miles away. Its owner, Amjad Alfrookh, said that a different "Fast Local" appeared on the broadcast. He was aware, however, that another company in the NYC/NJ area had taken his company name.

We then contacted the New York-based "Fast Local" company twice and left messages. But they never returned our calls.

### The new Yellow Pages strategy

Cimmino noticed that the scammers had ads in the Yellow Pages, which was the primary advertising strategy used by "Bad Bobs" 20 years ago. Even though most door companies have shifted to online marketing, some scammers are learning that the Yellow Pages still work.

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Why? "A lot of older people still use the Yellow Pages," said Cimmino, "and these older people are perfect targets. They don't know how to use technology to check for phony addresses on Google Maps."

### #1 tip: Check phony addresses

We asked the two experts for the best tips to help consumers avoid scammers. Both experts stressed the importance of checking the advertised street address of any garage door company.

"If they have an address listed, verify it on Google Maps to see if it actually exists," said McManus. Cimmino agreed, saying that checking street addresses "will almost completely stop the problem."

Cimmino was pleased with the final version of the IE episode, except for one detail.

"On camera, I was very specific about the importance of checking the address. But I was unhappy that that part didn't get aired," he said. "I think it would help a lot of people if that message got out."

### #2 tip: Unmarked trucks

Both experts noticed that both scammers had unmarked trucks. Cimmino said that of the other six companies, five had marked trucks. One company had an unmarked pickup, but it was nicely organized, and the tech wore a company shirt.

When a scammer drives an unmarked truck, he may be a subcontractor who has a loose relationship with any specific company.

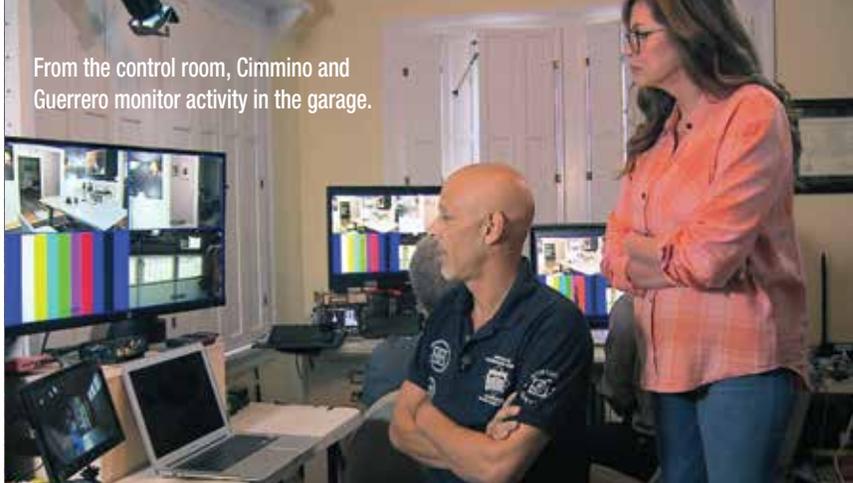
Consequently, McManus recommends another tactic to spot scammers: "Ask them to tell you the name of the company they represent." If he stumbles at the answer, or if his named company is different from the company you called, it's wise to send him away.

### "Our employees are salaried"

While some honest companies pay their employees by commission, all Bad Bobs motivate their techs by paying them solely by commission. In other words, the tech's only means of making any money is by getting a percentage of the total sale.

"Paying techs solely on commission gives them the motivation

From the control room, Cimmino and Guerrero monitor activity in the garage.



**"IF THEY HAVE AN ADDRESS LISTED, VERIFY IT ON GOOGLE MAPS TO SEE IF IT ACTUALLY EXISTS."**

**- MCMANUS**

to run up the bill," said Cimmino. "None of our guys are paid that way. We pound it into our guys that you never ever sell something they don't need."

Consequently, one way for an honest company to promote itself is to advertise that all its technicians are salaried. This assures customers that your technicians have no incentive to perform unnecessary repairs or to charge exorbitant rates for parts and services.

### 2/8 is better than 3/4

While the IE episode gives our industry another painful black eye, there is a silver lining to this dark cloud.

Since the 2014 "Today Show" exposé, the industry has developed a Task Force to fight the "Bad Bob problem" in a variety of ways, and Google has started banning ads from bad

companies. Is it all making a difference?

As noted in our fall 2019 issue (p. 44), Bad Bob is losing ground. Plus, both our experts think we're making progress.

"In the 'Today Show' investigation, only one of four guys did the right thing. In this episode, only two guys out of eight tried to rip off the customer," said McManus.

"It makes me think that the work we're doing to fight the problem is working. The industry may be improving." ■

*Editor's note: Are we getting better? To comment on this story, send an email to the editor at [vicki@vjonesmedia.com](mailto:vicki@vjonesmedia.com). To see the Inside Edition video, go to [InsideEdition.com](http://InsideEdition.com) and search for "garage door."*

## THE EXPERTS

### Andrew Cimmino

Andrew Cimmino has been in the garage door business since 1988 and has owned Christie Overhead Door in Staten Island, N.Y., since 1993. His company is accredited by IDEA, and he is an IDEA-certified trainer, an IDEA-certified Residential Garage Door Installer, an IDEA-certified Commercial Sectional Door Systems Technician, and an IDEA-certified Automated Gate Operator Installer. He also holds certifications from EPA, OSHA, and MESP and has held leadership positions in industry associations.



Cimmino

### Mark McManus

Mark McManus has been in the garage door business since 1991 and is part owner of Door Boy in Berkeley Heights, N.J., an IDEA-accredited company. He is one of the nation's few IDEA Master Technicians, which means that he is a certified Residential Garage Door Installer, a Commercial Garage Door Technician, a Commercial Rolling Door Systems Technician, and a Rolling Steel Fire Door Technician. He is currently the vice president of IDEA.



McManus