

“NADAR’S RAIDERS”—CONSUMER ADVOCATES



If you have a problem with a product, the first step is to go the source. Return it to the place of purchase and see if you can get help or advice on what to do next. If this does not help, then you may need to go for help. There are three basic types of groups that help consumers with problems: business groups, government agencies, and consumers groups. A well-known consumer group is “Nader’s Raiders”, the Public Interest Research Group.

Ralph Nader is a consumer advocate who has been in the public eye for many years. He and his group “Nader’s Raiders” have done a great deal to support consumer interests—sometimes with much controversy. Listed below are places to go for help if you have a consumer concern.

1. **The Better Business Bureau (BBB).** This is a non-profit organization that offers many services. The BBB gives general information to the public on products and services. It keeps records of how local businesses handle complaints, and background information about the business as well. The BBB will accept written complaints and will contact a local business on your behalf. It will also handle cases involving false advertising.
2. **TV or Radio Stations.** Sometimes local TV or radio stations offer consumer “hotline” services related to special news stories they produce. These often are very helpful because of the powerful effect of bad publicity!
3. **Small-Claims Court.** These court procedures are usually quick, inexpensive, and informal. You usually do not need a lawyer. These courts deal with claims that are between \$100 and \$3000. Each state has regulations governing small-claims courts.
4. **Consumer Affairs Offices.** There are state, county, and city offices in most states. They have a large selection of educational materials and information available. The information is generally objective and no-cost or low-cost.
5. **Private Consumer Groups.** These are groups that help individual consumers with complaints. You can contact your local consumer affairs office to get more information about groups in your area.

6. **Government Agencies.** The federal government has a number of specialized agencies that deal with health-related products and services. The information found in these sites is almost always objective and correct. Some of these are:
- **The Consumer Product Safety Commission.** The CPSC protects consumers against the making and sale of dangerous toys, games, appliances, etc. Call 1-800-638-2772 for information
 - **The Consumer Information Center.** The CIC distributes information to consumers. The website is: www.pueblo.gsa.gov/
 - **The Food and Drug Administration.** The FDA makes sure that food is safe and that it is labeled correctly. It also makes sure that cosmetics are safe and that drugs are labeled and safe. The website is: <http://www.fda.gov/>
 - **Federal Trade Commission.** The FTC prevents the unfair, false, or deceptive advertising of consumer products and services.
 - **The Food and Safety Quality Service.** The FSQS of the Department of Agriculture makes sure that meat and poultry are safe and labeled properly.

Adapted from “Consumer Health and Safety Activities”, Patricia Turner ,
The Center for Applied Research in Education