

# BBB® BULLETIN

Volume 81 no 1

Serving Central & South Alabama



## What's New at BBB? Letter Grade Rating Changes

**A**s an Accredited Business, you know that your BBB Business Review is vital to helping consumers find your company. The BBB seal, your rating, and other information in the Business Review show the world your commitment to marketplace trust.

We periodically review and retool our system to reflect ongoing BBB experience, to make the Business Reviews more useful to consumers, and therefore make them more helpful to businesses. Recent surveys consistently show that consumers want more information in BBB Business Reviews. In response to this demand, BBB has added complaint detail (with personal information removed) and customer reviews.

**BBB BUSINESS REVIEW**

Overview | Complaints | BBB Accreditation | Customer Reviews

BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS SINCE 01/28/2010

**Anthony's Ultimate Express Car Wash**

Phone: (205) 987-7878

Fax: (205) 987-3326  
3037 John Hawkins Pkwy, Birmingham, AL 35244-7032  
www.anthonyscarwash.com

f t

**ACCREDITED BUSINESS** **A+** On a scale of A+ to F  
Reason for Rating  
BBB Ratings System  
Overview

**We've recently made a few changes to the rating algorithm, effective January 21.**

**It's unlikely you will see a change in your company's rating, but we want you to know about it. This update to the ratings system reflects continued learning from BBB experience and input from consumers and businesses.**

BBB's letter grade rating represents BBB's degree of confidence that the business is operating in a trustworthy manner or will make a good faith effort to address customer concerns filed with BBB.

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## Q & A Regarding What's New

### Q. What are BBB Business Reviews?

**A.** BBB Business Reviews contain useful information to help consumers evaluate the companies with which they would like to do business. Every year, millions of consumers turn to BBB for this information. In 2013, BBB fielded more than 132 million inquiries via bbb.org. Each Accredited Business has a BBB Business Review.

### Q. What are BBB ratings?

**A.** Among the more popular features in the BBB Business Review is the rating, a letter grade (A+ to F) that is based on a proprietary formula using information known to BBB and incorporating BBB experience with the business. BBB's letter grade rating represents BBB's degree of confidence that the business is operating in a trustworthy manner or will make a good faith effort to address customer concerns filed with BBB.

### Some of the recent changes to the letter grading system include:

- Resolved complaints will now “age” so that older complaints carry less negative impact than newer ones; this rewards companies that fix problems (unresolved complaints do not age and will continue to incur significant penalties).
- A pattern of complaints carries an even greater penalty than in the past; this will have more of a negative impact on companies that don't clean up problems.
- Full credit for “Time in Business” has been reduced from 15 to 4 years to reflect today's fast-paced business environment.
- The size of the business is now determined by total revenue; this will help ensure that businesses are in the right category and rated accordingly.

There are a few other changes, none of which are likely to affect Accredited Businesses. However, here is one you will want to know about: any company claiming to be accredited when they are not will automatically have an F rating. If you see one of these, let us know right away!

If by chance your grade does change and you have questions about that, please call the Member Hotline at 205-558-2235 or email [info@csal.bbb.org](mailto:info@csal.bbb.org). We will walk you through the differences.

As always, thank you for your support of BBB and for our shared commitment to trust in the marketplace!



# BBB Welcomes New Businesses

## December 2014 - January 2015

The following firms have joined us during December - January in our fight for an honest marketplace. Accreditation is by invitation only and we must refuse a number of firms which don't meet our standards. Those listed below have been accepted because they believe in fair play and ethical conduct for their customers or clients. They join other manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, and professionals to support our crusade for integrity in business dealings. We welcome them and thank them.

### **Adamsville**

Kittle & Kittle Construction Co., Inc.

### **Alabaster**

Story Automotive, LLC

### **Anniston**

Absolute Environmental, LLC  
Anniston Super Wash  
Between Worlds Language and  
Transportation Services, LLC  
C Mac Plumbing  
Emtek Demolition and Grading  
John Hearn Plumbing

### **Bessemer**

Bessemer Glass and Industries  
Cool Temp Services

### **Billingsley**

TnT Pit Stop

### **Birmingham**

AdvaPay Systems, LLC  
ASA Remarketing, Inc.  
Gossett & Associates, LLC  
Southeast Tax Group  
Trussville Collision, Inc.  
Valley Cleaners, Inc.

### **Brighton**

Astro Auto Dismantlers, Inc.

### **Camden**

McGraw-Webb Chevrolet, Inc.

### **Carrollton**

Sansing Country Home, Inc.

### **Childersburg**

Supreme Collision Repair Center, Inc.

### **Clanton**

Central Heating & Cooling, LLC

### **Dothan**

Apex Payroll  
Kwicksilver Wheel Repair Pros  
S. A. Jones Construction, Inc.

### **Elmore**

Tri County Appliance

### **Enterprise**

Kenneth W. Chancey, DMD, LLC  
Veterans Carpet Cleaning & Lawn  
Service, LLC

### **Fairhope**

Auto Craft Collision Center  
Fairhope Title Services, LLC

### **Fayette**

West Alabama T.V. Cable Company, Inc.

### **Foley**

A.M. Builders, LLC  
Gates Builders, Inc.  
Mosley Maritime Services, LLC

### **Gadsden**

J & S Painting & Sheetrock

### **Gardendale**

Buffalo Wild Wings  
Decatur Highway Transmission  
& Motor

### **Hoover**

Majestees, LLC

### **Jacksonville**

Pritchett Wrecker Services

### **Jasper**

Courington Garage, LLC

### **Lincoln**

Talladega Fiberglass, Inc.

### **Mc Calla**

McCalla Memorial Funeral Home, LLC

### **Mobile**

Acceptance Loan Company, Inc.  
Daniels Sheet Metal Company, Inc.  
Deane's Tree Service  
Hodge's Chapel, LLC  
J. B. Shelton Academy, Inc.  
The Delicious Dietitian  
WH Construction Now, Inc.

### **Montgomery**

Affordable Garage Doors Online, LLC  
Bama Budweiser of Montgomery, Inc.  
Blue Ridge Mountain Water  
Second Chance Investments, LLC  
The Law Office of Mark Edward  
Smith, LLC  
Trinity Custom Homes, LLC  
Workable Solutions Investigative &  
Protective Services, LLC

### **Mountain Brook**

Pars Gallery of Fine Rugs

### **Ohatchee**

P.G. Wells Enterprise, Inc.

### **Oneonta**

M & R Realty, LLC

### **Pelham**

Complete Communication Services, Inc.

### **Prattville**

Rare Automotive, LLC

### **Reform**

Arbor Woods Health and Rehab, LLC

### **Saraland**

Superior Tint & Audio

### **Semmes**

Commodore Steel Buildings  
The Gathering of Jewels, Inc.

### **Spanish Fort**

T-Roys Relief Roofing

### **Springville**

AWP Horticulture, LLC

### **Sylacauga**

Hubbard Pharmacy, LLC

### **Theodore**

B & K Mechanical Service, Inc.  
Estes Heating & Air, Inc.

### **Troy**

Jack Metals, Inc.

### **Trussville**

Advance Video & Security, Inc.  
Associated Cooling & Heating  
Puro Clean  
Southeastern Service Company, Inc.  
Spring-Green Lawn Care  
Trussville Auto and Truck Repair, Inc.

### **Tuscaloosa**

Gordon Miller Realty Company  
SDJ Vault & Monument Company  
Warren Tire & Auto Center, Inc.  
Your Way Furniture, Inc.

### **Valley Grande**

Plumbing Contractors, LLC

### **Vestavia**

Doctor Cool Heating and Air  
Conditioning, LLC  
Overflow Heating & Cooling, LLC  
PuroClean Emergency Services  
Subsurface Imaging Solutions, LLC



# BBB Top Ten Scams of 2014

Better Business Bureau hears from thousands of consumers and business owners every year about a variety of scams and frauds. Many are new twists on existing scams, but scammers get more sophisticated every year in how they spoof trusted names and fool consumers.

**#10 Sweepstakes Scam:** You've won a contest! Or the lottery! All you have to do to claim your prize is to pay some fees or taxes in advance so they can release your prize. This is not a new scam, but it is a perennial problem.

**#9 Click Bait Scam:** This one takes many forms, but the most notorious of the past year was when the Malaysian Airline plane went missing ("click here for video"). Other click bait schemes use celebrity images, fake news, and other enticing stories to get you to unintentionally download malware.

**#8 Robocall Scam:** The notorious "Rachel from Cardholder Services" made a resurgence in 2014. This scam claims to lower your credit card interest rates and takes personal information including your credit card number and then charges fees to your card.

**#7 Government Grant Scam:** You get a call saying you've been awarded a government grant for thousands of dollars. It may even mention a program you've heard about in the news. All you have to do is pay a couple hundred in fees by wire transfer or prepaid debit card.

**#6 Emergency Scam:** You get a call or email from your grandchild or other relative who was injured, robbed or arrested while traveling overseas and needs money ASAP.

**#5 Medical Alert Scam:** You get a call or a visit from a company claiming a concerned family member ordered you a medical alert device. They take your credit card or banking information but you never receive anything.

**#4 Copycat Website Scam:** An email, text message or social media post about a terrific sale or new product arrives. You click through and it looks just like a popular retailer's site. But when you order, you either get a cheap counterfeit or nothing at all... and now they have your credit card number!

**#3 "Are You Calling Yourself?" Scam:** Scammers can make a call look like it's coming from anywhere. The latest trick puts your number in the Caller ID, which piques your curiosity and gets you to pick up the phone or return the call... and then they've snagged you in whatever scam they are running. It was almost a tie for the top spot this year, because BBB sees this one every day.

**#2 Tech Support Scam:** A call or a pop-up on your computer claims to be from Microsoft (or Norton, or Apple) about a problem on your computer. They say if you give "tech support" access to your hard drive, they can fix it. Instead, they install malware on your computer and start stealing your personal information.

**And the top Scam of the Year, because it's just so terrifying, is:**

**Why Scams Work:** There is a science to scams, and it may surprise you to know that scammers use many of the same techniques as legitimate sales professionals. The difference, of course, is that their "product" is illegal and could cost you a fortune.

**10 Sweepstakes Scam**  
You've won a contest! To claim your prize, pay this fee.

**9 Click Bait Scam**  
Celebrities, shocking video, fake news... anything to get you to click.

**8 Robocall Scam**  
"Rachel from Cardholder Services" was back in 2014!

**7 Government Grant Scam**  
You've been awarded a grant, just prepay these taxes...

**6 Emergency Scam**  
Your relative has been injured (or robbed or arrested) overseas!

**5 Medical Alert Scam**  
A "concerned family member" ordered this for you...

**4 Copycat Website Scam**  
Looks real enough, but the products are cheap counterfeits.

**"Are You Calling Yourself?" Scam**  
Why is MY number in my Caller ID?

**Tech Support Scam**  
"There's something wrong with your computer but I can fix it..."

**And the top Scam of the Year, because it's just so terrifying, is:**

**1 Arrest Scam**  
An ominous phone call from the police or government. You're about to be arrested for overdue taxes or for skipping out on jury duty! But you can avoid it with a prepaid debit card.

**For more information: [go.bbb.org/top-scams-2014](http://go.bbb.org/top-scams-2014)**

**#1 Arrest Scam:** You receive an ominous phone call from someone claiming to be a police officer or government agent (often the IRS in the United States or the CRA in Canada). They are coming to arrest you for overdue taxes or for skipping out on jury duty... but you can avoid it by sending them money via a prepaid debit card or wire transfer.



# 2014 Central and South Alabama Statistics

Total Incidences of Service	<b>1,365,946</b>
Total Complaints Worked	<b>6,445</b>
Complaints - Accredited Businesses	<b>1,736</b>
Complaints - Non Accredited Businesses	<b>4,709</b>
Average Days to Close Complaints	<b>24</b>
Visists to Website	<b>874,640</b>
Web Pageviews	<b>1,598,993</b>
Total Accredited Businesses December 31, 2014	<b>4,273</b>
BBB Business Reviews Viewed	<b>1,229,273</b>
BBB Accredited Rosters Viewed	<b>131,574</b>



## 2014 Top 25 Businesses by Number of Inquiries

Roofing Contractors	<b>42,726</b>
Auto Dealers - Used Cars	<b>38,894</b>
Home Builders	<b>32,528</b>
Heating & Air Conditioning	<b>25,299</b>
Construction & Remodeling Services	<b>23,899</b>
Attorneys & Lawyers	<b>23,499</b>
Auto Dealers - New Cars	<b>22,341</b>
Plumbers	<b>19,353</b>
Auto Repair & Service	<b>18,073</b>
Contractors - General	<b>17,504</b>
Auto Body Repair & Painting	<b>17,106</b>
Movers	<b>16,880</b>
Credit - Debt Consolidation Services	<b>15,860</b>
Collection Agencies	<b>14,628</b>
Apartments	<b>13,349</b>
Pest Control Services	<b>11,662</b>
Property Management	<b>11,555</b>
Real Estate	<b>11,099</b>
Electricians	<b>10,898</b>
Mortgage Brokers	<b>10,635</b>
Banks	<b>10,463</b>
Lawn Maintenance	<b>9,426</b>
Heating Contractors	<b>9,290</b>
Insurance Services	<b>9,074</b>
Tree Service	<b>8,970</b>

## 2014 Top 25 Businesses by Number of Complaints

Banks	<b>324</b>
Auto Dealers - New Cars	<b>218</b>
Publishers - Book	<b>198</b>
Auto Dealers - Used Cars	<b>155</b>
Insurance - Auto	<b>140</b>
Apartments	<b>119</b>
Collection Agencies	<b>90</b>
Auto Repair & Service	<b>81</b>
Magazines - Subscription Agents	<b>74</b>
Movers	<b>68</b>
Roofing Contractors	<b>59</b>
Construction & Remodeling Services	<b>58</b>
Furniture - Retail	<b>55</b>
Credit & Debt Counseling	<b>51</b>
Frog Dealers	<b>50</b>
Plumbers	<b>42</b>
Consumer Finance & Loan Companies	<b>41</b>
Real Estate	<b>39</b>
Internet Shopping	<b>37</b>
Rubbish & Garbage Removal	<b>37</b>
Property Management	<b>34</b>
Hotels	<b>33</b>
Credit - Debt Consolidation Services	<b>32</b>
Home Builders	<b>31</b>
Water Companies - Utility	<b>30</b>

## Officers

Liz Rutherford  
Chairperson  
Johnson+Sterling

Jeff Pizitz  
Pizitz Management Co.  
Immediate Past Chairman

Al Payton  
Secretary  
Payton Investments

John Wilson  
Treasurer  
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David C. Smitherman  
President/CEO

**Member Hotline**  
**205.558.2235**

## Arbitrators & Mediators

James L. Boohaker  
Quentin Brown  
Donald Burchett  
Dennis H. Dunn  
James Fibbe  
Cody Foote  
Tommy A. French  
Dennis Lathem  
Barbara Lawley  
Cheryl Leatherwood  
Debra B. Leo  
Rocco J. Leo  
Roger S. McCullough  
Robert W. McKay  
William A. Ratliff  
Arlene M. Richardson  
E. Berton Spence  
Henry C. Strickland  
Kay Wilburn  
Daniel E. Wise

## President's Message

**T**he evolution of the BBB ratings formula, highlighted on page 1 and 2 of this newsletter, is part of a constant effort on the part of BBB to always be advancing in the marketplace.

When we developed the ratings program several years ago, it quickly became the standard of the industry in reporting the trustworthy behavior of businesses. But this is a fast moving world.

The new formula reflects what is important to you and consumers today. Faster full credit for "time in business;" aging complaints so the older ones do not have the same weight as newer ones; businesses who steal our logo punished more severely than in the past.

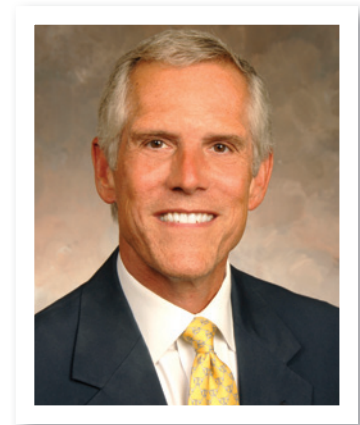
All in all, the new formula will provide more accurate and timely data for consumers as to the ethical behavior of the thousands of businesses we have in our data base and be more reflective of your hard work as a trustworthy business.

And now being tested.....Rating Stars. More on this in the next newsletter, but the millennial generation is attracted to visuals. And the zero to five star rating is matched to our formula. Look up your BBB Business Review to see how many stars you have! By the way, what are you doing to make sure your business is keeping up with the next generation of consumers?

Also in this issue, we provide our annual stats from 2014. Look to see if your business falls into either the Top 25 Complaints or Top 25 Inquiries. As the number of Alabama consumers coming to us each year continues to grow, we must provide the most up to date, balanced information available.

### In 2014, Your BBB:

- Received over 48,000 phone calls from consumers in Central & South Alabama.
- Had over 874,640 views on the Central & South Alabama website.
- Helped 913 consumers who inquired about Central & South Alabama charities.
- Helped consumers get information about your BBB using their mobile devices 179,536 times.
- Worked with consumers and businesses on over 6,400 complaints.
- Provided information about individual Central & South Alabama businesses 1,229,271 times.
- Welcomed 842 new businesses to our Accredited Business Roster, which now totals over 4,200 Accredited Businesses in Central & South Alabama.
- Provided rosters of trustworthy Central & South Alabama Accredited Businesses 131,574 times.
- Served consumers in Central & South Alabama a total of 1,365,945 times



We have seen our numbers grow exponentially over the last 5 years. The mere fact that we have provided almost 1.4 million incidences of service over the year just makes your annual investment in BBB all the more valuable. And you can help to grow these numbers further.

Be sure you use the BBB logo in all of your advertising. Make sure you also have it on your website. Not only does it show that you are a very special business, but it also encourages consumers to look at your business review in order to make more informed choices. Need assistance with the logo? Email [MyBBB@csal.bbb.org](mailto:MyBBB@csal.bbb.org) for help.

And finally, I would like to offer a special tribute to Charles Booth, one of our longest serving and most requested volunteer arbitrators. Charles died in January and he is missed by many. For the staff at BBB, Charles was always ready and willing to help with a difficult case, he was friendly to all parties in the dispute and serious as could be at arriving at a fair decision. He was a lover of sports cars, his Mississippi farm, hunting and most of all his family. Charles was an all around great guy.

# Better Business Bureau Reminders

## BBB LOGO USAGE

Just a reminder to our Accredited Businesses to remember to display the BBB Logo on your web site and on printed materials such as advertising mediums. The vast majority of prepurchase inquiries we receive involve searching for BBB accredited businesses. The placement of the logo will enhance the credibility of your business and attract potential customers. If you need instructions placing it on your web site or need a copy of the current approved logo, email your request to [MyBBB@csal.bbb.org](mailto:MyBBB@csal.bbb.org).



## Domain Name BBBL.org is NOT a BBB Website

Better Business Bureau is warning businesses not to click on an email that claims to be a “BBB SBQ” (standard business questionnaire). The email was sent out to what is believed to be tens of thousands of businesses across the country. The email has a ZIP file attachment that links to a site that can download malware on the user’s computer. Spoofing well-known and trusted brands is a common scam tactic. Other organizations such as the IRS, the FBI and Fortune 500 companies have been spoofed in similar phishing campaigns that victimized consumers and businesses.

The emails are coming from the domain “BBBL.org,” which is not a BBB domain name, although it is clearly designed to look as if it is. BBB will be turning over its information to the FBI and Interpol for further investigation.

BBB offers this advice to anyone who receives this or other unsolicited emails with links or attachments:

- Do not click on links or open attachments in unsolicited email.
- If your email program allows it, tag the email as spam.
- Report the email to your Internet Service Provider.
- If you are unsure if an email is legitimate, call the sender using a phone number that you know to be correct (not from the email).

Check out BBB Scam Stopper ([bbb.org/scam](http://bbb.org/scam)) for additional information on scams.

From: Admin <[no-reply@bbbl.org](mailto:no-reply@bbbl.org)>  
To: Al Gaston  
Cc:  
Subject: BBB SBQ Form

email is from @bbbl.org,  
BBB’s real domain is bbb.org

Thank you for supporting your Better Business Bureau (BBB).

As a service to BBB Accredited Businesses, we try to ensure that the information we provide to potential customers is as accurate as possible. In order for us to provide the correct information to the public. We ask that you review the information that we have on file for your company.

**We encourage you to print this SBQ Form, answer the questions and respond to us. (Adobe PDF).**

Please look carefully at your telephone and fax numbers on this sheet, and let us know any and all numbers used for your business (including 800, 900, rollover, and remote call forwarding). Our automated system is driven by telephone/fax numbers, so having accurate information is critical for consumers to find information about your business easily.

Thank you again for your support, and we look forward to receiving this updated information.

Sincerely,  
Accreditation Services

# Start With Trust<sup>®</sup>



# BBB<sup>®</sup> BULLETIN

Serving Central & South Alabama

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Birmingham, AL 35205  
Postmaster-Send address changes to:  
Better Business Bureau<sup>®</sup> Bulletin  
P.O. Box 55268  
Birmingham, AL 35255 - 5268  
Periodical Postage Paid at Birmingham  
205.558.2222

Periodical  
Postage  
PAID  
Birmingham,  
AL

## BBB EXECUTIVE STAFF OFFICERS

**David C. Smitherman**  
President/CEO

**David Thrasher**  
Director of Data Quality

**Garet Smitherman**  
Director of Operations

**Babs Harris**  
Director of Business Development

## Start With Trust<sup>®</sup>



Your BBB Is  
Available For  
Speaking  
Engagements!

Francine Wasden, Executive Director of the Greenville Chamber of Commerce, a BBB Accredited Business, invited David Smitherman to speak at the Greenville Rotary Club on January 22, 2015. Topic of the speech was *The BBB is Here for You.*



photo courtesy of Andrew Garner, Greenville Advocate