

From mountain to sea

Trading Standards Bulletin

Bulletin No. 56

The articles in these bulletins are based on real life complaints made to Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards department unless otherwise stated to make them as relevant as possible to readers. Names, exact addresses etc. have been withheld to avoid identifying complainants and to comply with GDPR.

Doorstep Crime/ Cold Calling

Over the last few weeks Trading Standards have received a number of reports about cold callers, particularly in the Garioch and Deeside areas offering to do roofing work for residents. Some of these cold callers have also been leafleting homes in an effort to drum up trade.

On the occasions when work was done, it was done to a very poor standard and the final cost to the resident has been much higher than the original verbal estimate provided by the roofer (of course, the low estimate cost is simply a hook to snare the resident).

Our advice to residents remains the same when it comes to cold callers of any sort remains the same...

- the key point is to not allow the cold caller into your home, especially if you are alone, as this is when they could steal from your home, get themselves settled in to wear down your objections and your resistance
- keep them at the doorstep, deploy your door chain, door bar or door jammer before you open the door, so that they cannot push the door open against your wishes
- speak to a trusted neighbour or friend who lives nearby to see if they would be willing to act as your nominated neighbour, dealing with cold callers to your home on your behalf. This arrangement should be made sooner rather than later and should not be left until the caller is at the door
- site 'No Cold Caller' stickers or notices at your gate and front door to make it plain to visitors that cold callers are not welcome (these can be obtained from Trading Standards or online from reputable retailers for just a few pounds)
- if a cold caller comes to the door, you don't have to answer or open the door, simply call your nominated neighbour to see if they can assist you,



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- consider having a video doorbell installed so that when a cold caller approaches your door, the camera in the doorbell records their image. Some types even allow you to talk to the caller and hear their voice. It also means that you can end the call without even having to go to the door
- if the cold caller offers to do any sort of work for you, politely decline, thank them for their concern, advise them that you have a family member who 'does that sort of thing' and that you will get them to look at the issue (wee white lies here are permissible)
- if the cold caller is persistent, tell them you have someone in with you or something on the stove which is boiling over then excuse yourself from the door. Remember to lock the door behind you
- if the caller refuses to leave your doorstep, especially if your nominated neighbour is unavailable, phone the Police. Contact details are at the end of this bulletin

If you are a nominated neighbour, in addition to the above:

- please don't let the caller enter your home or your friend's
- make sure both properties are secure. This prevents unauthorised people sneaking in through side doors or back doors whilst you might be distracted
- if you must let the cold caller in, never leave them alone in the house or allow them to move freely from room to room
- check the cold caller's ID carefully and verify it with their company, if possible, by calling them
- look up the cold caller's company in the Phone Book rather than relying on information on their ID card,
- see the cold caller out of the house, then lock the door
- if a caller or workman becomes aggressive or abusive, withdraw indoors for your own safety rather than risk the situation getting worse
- try to avoid getting into confrontations or arguments, rather...go inside
- get inside and call the Police on 999 if it becomes an emergency or 101 if not

In any case, once the cold caller is gone, report the matter to the Police and/or Trading Standards.

Cost of Living Campaign October 10-14

Aberdeenshire Trading Standards are undertaking a week-long consumer protection campaign starting on Monday, October 10.



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This operation will centre around the current cost of living crisis and the potential for consumer detriment and will focus on a range of issues and cover the breadth of work undertaken by Trading Standards.

Officers will be operating throughout the whole of Aberdeenshire, undertaking a range of activities including petrol forecourt checks, price checking, product weighing, volume checks and investigating misleading descriptions and packaging.

In support of the cost of living campaign, officers have developed a range of advice for consumers and will provide business with helpful measures which will in turn help support Trading Standards in protecting consumers.

Protective Service Manager Gordon Buchanan says: "The cost of living crisis places significant financial pressure on both consumers and businesses and it is vital that we ensure that consumers are protected and that price increases are transparent. It is inevitable that scammers will use the opportunity to promise quick financial gains and access to non-existent government grants, particularly for heating costs."

If you are aware of any scams or feel you are the victim of a scam or fraudulent act then contact Trading Standards on 01467 537222.

Misc.

As we are approaching fireworks season once again, I thought it might be useful to point out a recent change in the law relating to fireworks. The Fireworks and Pyrotechnical Articles (Scotland) Act 2022 was given Royal Assent on 10 August 2022. Section 21 of this Act, which came into force on Monday 10 October 2022, creates an offence of providing fireworks (or pyrotechnical articles) to children.

In straightforward terms, under this Act:

- a child is classed as a person under 18 years of age
- 'providing' covers buying (often called proxy purchasing), attempting to buy, giving or otherwise making available a firework (or pyrotechnical article) for a child
- firework means a pyrotechnical article which is covered by either British Standard BS EN 15947:2015 or BS EN 16261:2012 (which fairly trips off of the tongue...) or would be considered a firework if it was intended as a form of entertainment
- this particular Section will most often be enforced by Police Scotland

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- Anyone who commits an offence against this Section faces the possibility of 6 months in jail or a fine up to the amount of £5000, or both
- There are, of course, exemptions to this offence contained in the Act and many further provisions which will come into force at a later date

Remember too, it is already an offence under existing legislation for a retailer to sell certain types of fireworks to children under the age of 18.

Further details of the new Act, including the definition of a pyrotechnical article, can be found [here](#) and [here](#)

Conclusion

Please note that the advice given in these bulletins has been deliberately kept simple, so that if you are faced with a scenario such as the ones discussed here where fear, panic and alarm are often tools used deliberately by scammers, you will know what to do at that time. Remember, after the initial panic is over, you may have rights which Trading Standards can help you with. We can also help you with advice about any article mentioned in these bulletins.

If you have been the victim of a Doorstep Crime or an attempted crime, whether Bogus Caller or Rogue Trader, please report the matter to Consumer Advice Scotland so that Trading Standards can build a detailed, ongoing picture of the activities of these scammers throughout the Shire. This would be a great help to us to tackle this sort of crime.

If you have any information to share about the unlawful sale of tobacco or disposable vapes, please use the Contact Info below to pass that information to Trading Standards. If you would prefer, you can report the information anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Contact Info

For non-urgent Trading Standards enquiries in Aberdeenshire, please contact Consumer Advice Scotland at <https://www.consumeradvice.scot/> or on 0808 164 6000. For urgent Trading Standards matters, contact Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards at 01467 537222.

Aberdeen City Council's Trading Standards department can be contacted by calling 0300 0200 292 or e-mailing tradingstandards@aberdeencity.gov.uk



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Contact Police Scotland on 999 if you need urgent Police assistance or 101 for non-urgent matters.

For more information about scams please visit Friends Against Scams at <https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/> or Take Five at <https://takefive-stopfraud.org.uk/>

Please direct any media queries to news@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or 01467 538222 during office hours.

All previous Trading Standards bulletins can be found at:
<http://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/dataset/trading-standards-crime-and-scams-bulletin>