



From mountain to sea

Trading Standards

Doorstep Crime, Scams & Safety

Bulletin No. 19

Doorstep Crime

Reported instances of doorstep crime have been low recently but we mustn't become complacent about this. Traditionally, this is the time of year we'd expect to see an upturn in the number of incidents reported as the weather improves (hopefully!). To a large degree, this increase is due to one main type of doorstep crime: Rogue Traders. These types of crime usually involve seasonal work such as driveways being tarred, trees being trimmed or felled and rooves being 'repaired'. We'll have more to say about this type of crime, and doorstep crime in general, in our next bulletin as part of the Shut Out Scammers 2021 campaign.

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.

Scams

One area which we've not touched on before is dating site scams. One resident recently struck up a friendship on a dating site with a man who said he was in the British Army. As messages were exchanged, the man stated that he wanted to buy his way out of the Army and asked the resident to buy him a small sum of Amazon vouchers and send the details of these to him to achieve this, which she did (this is the 'test' part of the scam, to see if the victim is kind-hearted enough to part with money). The man then came back to the resident to say that he needed another, larger amount of vouchers bought which, thankfully, the resident refused. The scam was based primarily on the vouchers being exchanged for cash by the scammer at his end and the cash being given to the Army for the buy-out. Please remember that Amazon vouchers can only be legitimately used on Amazon's website, not redeemed for cash. At first mention of Amazon vouchers being used for anything other than on the Amazon website, alarm bells should be ringing in your mind. The scam was also based on the man being what he said he was which through time was shown not to be true (This is the basis of many types of internet scam such as dating scams or



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'sextortion' scams). Finally, if you wouldn't part with money or money's worth to someone you know well and trust, you shouldn't part with it to someone you hardly know, even if dating is an element in the mix, until you are absolutely sure that they are what they say they are.

Residents continue to receive texts from 'Royal Mail', claiming that a parcel has not been delivered due to a shortage in the postage paid. The texts usually include a hyperlink to click on to make payment of the additional postage. Clearly, this is a scam. Royal Mail do not operate in this way (for example, how would they have obtained someone's mobile phone number?). If you receive such a text, please do not respond to it and if you're unsure, seek advice from Trading Standards or Consumer Advice Scotland. Texts like these can also be sent to 7726, which is a free reporting service run by Ofcom.

A similar scam which was recently reported involving a resident who received a text from 'Hermes' advising of an undelivered parcel. The text also attempted to persuade the resident to pay charges for re-delivery of the parcel. However, the text also asked for the resident's personal details and the date of the previous attempted delivery was set in the future. Also, the web page (www.missed-delivery.com/Hermes) does not exist. The resident did not respond but did report the scam to Trading Standards.

Although not in our area, I think it's worth highlighting that one resident in another Local Authority received a phone call at home from someone from BT Openreach requesting remote access to their computer to prevent a hacker gaining access. Rightly discerning that the caller WAS the hacker, the resident refused the request and hung up. Please remember that you should NEVER give remote access to your devices to an unexpected caller, no matter who they say they are nor how genuine they sound. Simply hang up, then report the matter to the Police and/or Trading Standards, dependent on the circumstances.

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.

Contact



From mountain to sea

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

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

For more information about scams please visit Friends Against Scams at <https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/>

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