

From mountain to sea

Trading Standards

Doorstep Crime, Scams & Safety

Bulletin 2

Doorstep Crime & Scams

- Scam e-mails purporting to be from the UK Government, along with logos etc. designed to mimic the 'gov.uk' format which advise the recipient that they have qualified for a reduction in their Council Tax are targeting consumers. The e-mail asks the recipient to click on a hyperlink to claim their reduction. Prior to making the claim though, the recipient must put in personal details which might allow the scammers to access the victim's money. Points to watch out for are poor spelling and grammar, generic e-mails which do not address recipients by name and internal discrepancies (such as amounts to be refunded), but the main point to bear in mind is that Council Tax matters are dealt with by Local Authorities, not central government. It's likely that these e-mails are coming from abroad, so the simple solution is to consign them to your 'Spam' or 'Junk' folder.

Trading Standards would advise residents against responding to or clicking on any link contained in an e-mail and if there is any concern about its authenticity then to contact Aberdeenshire Council Tax direct. If personal or bank details have been divulged or money debited from an account, then the resident is advised to contact their bank immediately so further loss can be avoided and a claim initiated.

- A resident was contacted by phone by a male claiming to be from Sky. The caller asked the resident about their internet speed and claimed this was due to their computer having been hacked. The resident was advised to follow a series of steps allowing the caller remote access to the computer and later their bank account, to provide financial compensation. During this the resident was advised by a text from their bank that someone was trying to transfer money OUT of their account at that time. This transaction was stopped before it could be completed. After a short exchange, the resident hung up on the caller. Of course, the caller was not from Sky, who do not operate in this manner, but a scammer.

The advice from Trading Standards is NEVER hand over bank or personal details to any caller on the phone or allow remote access to your devices, no matter who they say they work for. Simply hang up. If you have any concerns about the authenticity of the call, then contact the business direct.

- A vulnerable resident was contacted by phone on numerous occasions by scammers, who were described as 'relentless', until the resident paid a four-figure sum to release compensation 'due' for a previous incident. The scammers claimed to be working for a financial company, but this was clearly untrue, and the pressure put on the resident was considerable.

If you are concerned about unsolicited or scam calls then you may want to consider installing a call blocking device which intercepts and blocks unwanted calls. Trading Standards has a quantity of these devices that we can provide to residents where the installation of the device



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will be of benefit to them. Other devices are also available to buy and some service providers offer a similar function but without a device, so it may be worth contacting your phone provider to inquire.

- Consumers are often tempted to buy goods, including pets, over social media which seem to be available at a very attractive price. Trading Standards would advise extreme caution on doing this as, if you receive the goods (and victims often don't) they may be of a shoddy standard if not outright counterfeit, direct payments between bank accounts offer no protection for the consumer and there may be infringements of copyright and/or trademarks involved.

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 164 600.

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.