Aberdeenshire COUNCIL

From mountain to sea

Trading Standards
Doorstep Crime, Scams & Safety Bulletin 14

Doorstep Crime & Scams

- A neighbouring authority has reported that residents have been visited by doorstep callers offering to tar driveways with left over materials from a council job. On one occasion the tar was laid despite the homeowners stating that they did not want any work done. The callers then demanded £3000 for the work and increased this to almost £7000 when the homeowners refused to pay.

- Reports have been received of doorstep callers leafleting and offering gutter cleaning and pressure washing services at residential properties in the Stonehaven area.

  Residents are reminded that they are under no obligation to engage with doorstep callers or agree to have any work carried out, and if you have a 'No Cold Calling' sign on display, the caller is committing an offence if they ignore it. If you would like a 'No Cold Calling' sign please contact Aberdeenshire Trading Standards using the contact details noted below.

  Doorstep callers must, along with other trades/works people adhere to the Scottish Governments Covid-19 requirements for 'working at people's homes'. Restrictions placed on the number of people allowed inside or outside of a property must also be adhered to.

  Further information - https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-general-guidance-for-safer-workplaces/pages/work-in-other-peoples-homes-faq/

  Concerns about doorstep callers can be reported to Trading Standards on 01467 537222 or Police Scotland on 999 (urgent) or 101 (non-urgent).

  When reporting doorstep crime or concerns about doorstep callers, try to remember key details about the trader such as business names, addresses, names, age, accents, descriptions, vehicle type, registrations and signage. Keep all original paperwork, leaflets and brochures.

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- A resident received an email purporting to be from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). The email informed that a car tax payment had failed and advised the recipient to click on the link included to make a new payment. The link redirected to a website that looked very similar to the genuine DVLA website but was in fact fake.

- A resident received a text message on their mobile phone purporting to be from HSBC about an apparent request to move money from 'their' HSBC account. The message continued to say that if this was not requested by them to click on the link included.

- Another resident received a text message advising that they were entitled to a tax refund and to click on the link included to process it.

  Residents are advised not to click on any link included in an unsolicited text or email as these are likely to take you to a scammers website where viruses can be downloaded onto your phone or computer and harvest passwords and other data from it. The link could also take you to a fake website where you will be prompted to enter personal and bank details which will later be used to steal money from you. Unknown texts should be deleted/blocked and unfamiliar emails left unopened and sent to the 'Junk/Spam' folder and if you need to contact a bank or government department use the official contact details and not those included in the text/email.

- Trading Standards has also been advised that texts and emails relating to Covid-19 scams continue to target people throughout Scotland. These messages involve numerous tactics, apparently based on the false premise that the caller is employed by the NHS and the recipient may get the Covid vaccine sooner than they otherwise would.

  The NHS staff will **never**: ask you for payments, bank account, bank card or credit card details; ask you for your banking password or PIN number; ask you to confirm your identity by sending them details of passports, driving licenses, bills etc. and they will never arrive at your home unannounced to administer the vaccine.

- A resident has reported that a 4 year old dog purchased via Gumtree was in fact 8 years old.

  Online platforms can be used by genuine breeders/owners to sell puppies and dogs, but they are often used by unscrupulous sellers to advertise farmed puppies or dogs that have been stolen. Advice on how to buy a puppy/dog safely can be found at - https://www.buyapuppysafely.org/

Safety

- There are many adverts on various social media offering cheap tobacco or cigarettes for sale, usually about half the normal retail prices seen in shops and supermarkets. Selling tobacco and cigarettes on social media is illegal, the sellers are highly unlikely to be registered on the Scottish Tobacco Register (which they are required to be to sell these types of products) and the contents of these types of cigarettes have been found to contain rat poison, lead, arsenic, asbestos, dead flies and human faeces. Most of these types of products are illicit (smuggled) or counterfeit (manufactured by criminal gangs), or both.

  The main driver for these types of sales is price but given the above we would recommend only purchasing cigarettes from legitimate sources.

Contact

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.