



From mountain to sea

Trading Standards

Doorstep Crime, Scams & Safety

Bulletin No. 21

Doorstep Crime

We've recently received reports of males approaching householders purporting to be window cleaners and offering to wash their windows on a regular or semi-regular basis, then charging high prices to do so. Please be aware that anyone operating as a window cleaner should have applied to Aberdeenshire Council (or to the relevant Local Authority if outwith Aberdeenshire) and received their licence before starting any work as a window cleaner. This process allows the Local Authority to complete background checks on the applicant to confirm, amongst other things, that they are a fit and proper person to do this line of work and that they have public liability insurance in the event of any mishaps. Window cleaners are not permitted to operate until they have received their licence from the Local Authority and they must wear their licence conspicuously about their upper body whilst working and show it to anyone who has a reasonable reason for asking to see it. Anyone who fails to do any of these things may be committing an offence under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act, 1982. To try to avoid problems we would recommend only using a licensed window cleaner and that a price for the work should be agreed between a householder and a window cleaner before any work starts, so there are fewer chances of a misunderstanding later.

Scams

There have been a couple of recent reports of residents being called at home on their landlines from 'an insurance company', based in Liverpool, calling to advise the resident that the appliance insurance they have on their washing machine has expired. This has caused the residents to become alarmed and to renew their insurance whilst on the phone, so they can maintain cover for their washing machines. It has later transpired that the existing insurance for the washing machines had not expired and that the call was a scam. The whole pretext of the call is false. We would recommend that if you get a call like this, take a note of the company name and phone number, the caller's name if possible and any other information offered, then simply hang up. Please then report the matter to Police and Trading Standards, including any information noted. Please do not divulge any bank or card information to the caller.

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There has also been a recent report of a resident being contacted by telephone from a male purporting to be from a very well-known financial investment company and persuaded to part with a five figure sum of money to invest in bonds. The money was transferred some time ago via direct bank transfer but the resident recently tried to log on to their account, using the paperwork provided by the male to see how their investment was performing, but was unable to. They then contacted the company concerned, to gain access, only to be advised that it was all a scam. Efforts are ongoing to recover the resident's money. This type of scam rests on the credibility of the scammer, who in the instance appeared very plausible. Our advice is to never discuss financial matters, especially investment 'opportunities', with cold callers on the phone. Simply hang up on them as the risk that they may be scammers is too great. If you are looking for an investment opportunity, only use companies which are regulated by the UK financial regulator, the Financial Conduct Authority (<https://www.fca.org.uk/>), consider only using a company with a local branch office and properly qualified advisors. Do some research on both the company and the qualifications presented by the advisor. Ask questions. Check the answers. Remember, investing is about risk assessment and management. That should start before you part with any cash.

Also, you can keep abreast of current scams at the following reputable websites:
Friends Against Scams <https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/>
Action Fraud <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/individual-protection>
Take Five <https://takefive-stopfraud.org.uk/advice/general-advice/>
FCA Scam Smart <https://www.fca.org.uk/scamsmart>

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.

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.

Contact



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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.