



From mountain to sea

Trading Standards

Doorstep Crime, Scams & Safety

Bulletin No. 27

Doorstep Crime/ Cold Calling

We're aware of a number of reports recently from the Formartine area of a man with a vehicle going door to door looking for labouring work and claiming that he is employed by 'the Council'. Please note that no Aberdeenshire Council employee would behave in this manner and we would ask that anyone who comes to your door asking for work and claiming to work for the Council should be treated with caution, for this reason. We have previously discussed how if you need garden work or other labouring jobs done, about taking the initiative and speaking to friends and family about who they can recommend or looking for traders in reliable sources of information such as the Yellow Pages, the Which? Trusted Trader webpage (<https://trustedtraders.which.co.uk/>) or the Scotland Trusted Trader webpage (<https://www.trustedtrader.scot/>). Using more reliable methods such as these can help avoid headaches in the future.

And on a similar but unrelated matter:

Trading Standards are investigating a report of individuals touting for business by purporting to be from Aberdeenshire Council roads service.

One resident from the Mearns reported an incident to both Trading Standards and Police Scotland where men had come to the door claiming to be from the council and offering to undertake dressing works on the road to their farm which is several metres from the public road as roadworks were being carried out in the area.

The resident agreed to the works and the men carried out the road dressing, advising they would do it for £1.50 per square foot. However, after treating a considerable area of road surface, they subsequently claimed they were not from the council and would send the customer a bill – which in this instance would have been substantial. When the customer contacted the police, the men quickly left and said they could just have it for free.

Trading Standards Team Manager Gary Glasgow warned: "Neither council employees nor any of our contractors would ever approach a resident or

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business and offer to undertake this kind of road improvement works – regardless of whether works are being undertaken in the local vicinity or not. We would urge residents to carefully research any individual or company before agreeing to any work proceeding.”

For more advice on how to protect yourself from doorstep scammers and bogus tradesmen, visit:

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/business/trading-standards/scams/#doorstepsell>

and

<https://www.scotland.police.uk/advice-and-information/scams-and-frauds/doorstep-crime-and-bogus-callers/>

Scams

One resident was recently contacted via social media by a self-styled US financial expert offering to assist the resident with investing in the cryptocurrency Bitcoin. Bitcoin has been in the news over the last few months regarding its recent strong price increase. The expert also appeared very knowledgeable and credible, with her own website. She was also very persuasive and managed to persuade the resident to invest a substantial sum of money, via a payment app. Several days later, after the resident had changed her mind and asked for a refund, the expert immediately closed down all channels of communication and has not refunded a penny. It became clear that in fact the expert is a scammer. Cryptocurrencies are a little-known area and a highly volatile medium, with large and sudden price changes. They are also an area which is beyond regulation because of their web-based nature, although, for some, that is one of their attractions. Our advice is to tread carefully in these areas, if at all. It is not a place for the faint-hearted or naïve. Likewise, as we have warned before about taking up financial offers from cold callers over the phone, the same approach applies with these offers which come over social media from strangers, especially if the ‘expert’ is based in another country as they are beyond the jurisdiction of UK law. Between a combination of investing in cryptocurrencies and an overseas ‘expert’, this is a highly risky strategy and, unlike The Hunger Games, the odds are never in your favour. If you have funds which you’re considering investing, please take professional advice first and foremost from someone who can demonstrate that they are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. There have been similar incidents to the one above reported to Trading Standards, which are being investigated.

We continue to receive reports about scam texts purporting to be from the Post Office, Parcelforce, Hermes, etc, regarding missed parcel deliveries. These texts usually incorporate a hyperlink to a website where a re-delivery can be booked –

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at a fee. Of course, delivery companies do not operate like this and the texts have been sent by scammers. One method of dealing with these scam texts, as well as not responding, is to forward the text to the short code 7726. This is a free service provided by telephone operators who then collate these numbers and if they're satisfied that the sender is a scammer will block the originating number. If the text is simply a marketing text and you're happy the sender is genuine, you can reply to them with the word 'STOP' and they should.



The infographic features a light blue background with a large white speech bubble containing a red exclamation mark. At the top left, there is a red dashed box with the URL www.scotland.police.uk. To the right of the speech bubble, there are logos for Police Scotland, NPCC, Cyber Aware, and a 'STOP FRAUD' logo. Below the speech bubble, there is a red dashed box with an envelope icon and the number 7726. The text 'Received a suspicious text message?' is written in bold black and red font. Below this, a paragraph explains that suspicious text messages should be forwarded to 7726 for investigation. A thick red horizontal bar is at the bottom of the infographic.

www.scotland.police.uk

Received a suspicious text message?

Suspicious text messages should be forwarded to 7726. This enables your provider to investigate the origin of the text and take action, if found to be malicious.

 7726

POLICE SCOTLAND NPCC Cyber Aware STOP FRAUD

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/> 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.