



From mountain to sea

Trading Standards

Doorstep Crime, Scams & Safety

Bulletin No. 24

Doorstep Crime

With Summer now allegedly in full swing, many householders may be tempted to hire in gardeners to help with their garden maintenance routine. This can sometimes involve accepting offers of gardeners who move from door to door looking for work. Occasionally, bona fide gardeners operate like this but so do many 'gardeners' who are nothing more than rogue traders (scammers). We have discussed before how hiring cold callers at the door to attend to tree surgery or tar laying can lead to problems such as sub-standard work, sometimes requiring remedial work from genuine traders at further expense. One aspect which we haven't covered is fly-tipping. Some rogue gardeners, rather than paying the fee for commercial waste services and taking garden waste to the three Council locations for treatment (at Ellon, McDuff and Banchory), simply dump the waste at the side of the road for others to clear up, often at public expense. If you are tempted to hire gardeners cold calling at the door, you can help reduce the likelihood of fly-tipping by asking to see the gardener's SEPA Waste Carrier's Registration Document (often just referred to as a SEPA Licence). If the gardener can't produce one, there's a definite risk that your waste may be fly-tipped once it's out of your sight. We ask that you stick only to those gardeners who can produce their document.

Details of the SEPA Document can be found at:

<https://www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/waste/waste-carriers-and-brokers/>

Scams

Further to the article in the last Bulletin about a resident overpaying for renewing their Driving Licence, we have recently received a similar report from a different resident who tried to call DVLA on a 090 phone number (found via an internet search engine), believing that it was a genuine number. The resident was put on hold for 25 minutes after which the call was terminated without connecting. The resident later learned that the call cost £3.60 per minute with a total cost of over £90. We would recommend that when trying to contact DVLA about anything, the first port of call should be a search on the www.gov.uk website as all



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information held there is genuine. The DVLA contact number of 0300 790 6802 only costs 10p per minute if you need to call.

Similarly, another resident reported that when they tried to declare their vehicle as 'off road' via the Statutory Off Road Notice (SORN) process, they made the mistake of trying to do so via a website which has no connection to DVLA. The process cost the resident £30 and their vehicle was still not legally SORN'ed.

The common theme in all of these reports is that when anyone has official business with DVLA, the ONLY trustworthy way to contact that Government department starts with an internet search on www.gov.uk. No standalone website has the authority to process your enquiry, so please do not start the process with an open search on any search engine; go straight to www.gov.uk instead.

www.scotland.police.uk

HMRC, DVLA and TV Licensing...

were the most spoofed brands used in phishing emails reported to the Suspicious Email Reporting Service (SERS) last year.

Report suspicious emails to:
 report@phishing.gov.uk



Logos: POLICE SCOTLAND, NPCC, Cyber Aware, TO STOP FRAUD

In previous bulletins we've highlighted various types of scam where victims are induced to transfer money from their own bank account to that of a scammer, either wittingly or unwittingly. These are often referred to as bank transfer or authorized push payment (APP) scams. It is perhaps not well known that on 28 May 2019 a small group of UK banks launched the APP Scams Voluntary Code, which was aimed at helping victims of such scams get reimbursed for the money they had lost. Since 2019, numerous other banks have joined the Code. Further details can be found at:

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<https://www.which.co.uk/consumer-rights/advice/what-to-do-if-you-re-the-victim-of-a-bank-transfer-app-scam-aED6A0I529rc>

If you find that you have become a victim of one of these scams, Trading Standards may be able to help you deal with your bank and may also be able to assist you get your money back, so please give us a call to see if we can help.

Conclusion

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

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.