

From mountain to sea

Trading Standards Bulletin

Bulletin No. 47

Doorstep Crime/ Cold Calling

Trading Standards has recently become aware of a male in the Peterhead area who has been going door-to-door claiming to work for the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). The male has been attempting to gain entries to people's homes on the pretext that he would like to read the residents' electricity or gas meters as part of a CAB project to save people money. In some instances, the male has promised the resident that they will receive a text with a discount code if they participate.

Please be aware, CAB have NOT employed anyone in this capacity. The male is a scammer trying to wangle his way into peoples' home for his own ends.

Should anyone present themselves at your door or the door of a relative or friend purporting to be from CAB and they are there to read a meter, please:

- Keep yourself safe
- DO NOT let the caller into your home under any circumstances; keep them outside
- If necessary, keep your door closed when speaking to the caller or apply your door chain, door bar or other door security device
- Summon your nominated neighbour for support (corroboration) if you have one
- If you're comfortable opening your door, ask for ID and take note of details on the ID card, such as name, organisation etc.
- Take note of the caller's physical description, i.e., sex, age range, ethnicity, height, clothing and any distinctive features
- Take note of any vehicles used, i.e., make, model, colour and (ideally) registration number of the vehicle
- Report the matter promptly to Police Scotland on 101, or 999 if it is an emergency

Scams

One Buchan resident recently tried to sign up for a Swiss online dating website. He signed up for the premium service for a month but when he tried to make

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payment by credit card of 65 Euros, his card provider blocked the transaction so he thought no more about it and simply gave up on the website.

Several days later he received an e-mail from the website reminding him to make payment, which he didn't do as he'd not received any sort of service from them. As time went on, the e-mails continued but the website began insisting that he would have to sign an online cancellation form ending the agreement. The website also began threatening the resident with debt collectors for a breach of contract. Thankfully, the resident did not get flustered at these e-mails. Instead, he did some research and discovered that the website had numerous online reviews indicating that they were scammers and that they had continued to take monthly payments from customers who had signed up for the one month option as those customers had also not signed the online cancellation form.

Many other customers reviews suggest that the website has also tried numerous times to take payment from their bank or credit cards, which the banks had repeatedly blocked; that the website has no easy function to cancel subscriptions and that any e-mails sent about this simply bounce back to the sender as undeliverable; that customers have been locked out of their own accounts and that customers e-mail addresses have apparently been shared with other people, who have then e-mailed that customer.

If you choose to use one of these sites, please consider the following:

- Stick to the better known websites rather than the lesser known ones, to reduce the risk of being scammed by the website
- Look first on the website on how to cancel any subscriptions or regular payments
- Check the website out on review sites like Trustpilot and www.review42.com/uk as a guide, in case it's the site which is the scammer
- Check statements regularly for any unauthorised payments
- Report any unauthorised payments to your bank or credit card company
- Use a secondary bank or credit card for payments, if possible, in case there are unauthorised deductions and the card has to be cancelled
- If the company is based abroad, this might constrain what Police or Trading Standards might be able to achieve when dealing with them. However, it might also constrain the company from pursuing customers who it claims are still due them money
- If in doubt, steer well clear

Misc.

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World Anti-Counterfeiting Day, 8 June 2022

Counterfeiting impacts all industries. Enforcement against physical intellectual property-infringing goods such as clothing, electrical items and consumables has unfortunately been unable to keep pace with the increase in the volume of international trade in counterfeit goods over the past 10 years.

However, some amazing work has been done by authorities who have seized millions of counterfeit and substandard products in recent operations, making the world safer for us all as counterfeit goods are frequently of poor quality and often downright dangerous.

Recent reports from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) estimate that trade in counterfeit and pirated products amount to more than \$500 BILLION annually. That is more than 3% of all world trade.

One such example of this amazing work came recently from Blackpool Trading Standards involving counterfeit cigarettes containing glass and rat droppings. Details can be found [here](#)

Join us on World Anti-Counterfeiting Day, 8 June 2022, in raising awareness of the negative impact counterfeit and pirated goods have on our health, safety and security. Counterfeiting is not a victimless crime and the money it generates often goes to fund other forms of criminal activity.

For more information on the scale of impact of counterfeit goods, please click [here](#)



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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. We can also help you with advice about any article mentioned in these bulletins.

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.

If you have any information to share about the unlawful sale of tobacco or disposable vapes, please use the Contact Info below to pass that information to Trading Standards. If you would prefer, you can report the information anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Contact Info

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 Police 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.

All previous Trading Standards bulletins can be found at:
<http://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/dataset/trading-standards-crime-and-scams-bulletin>