



From mountain to sea

Trading Standards Bulletin

Bulletin No. 48

Doorstep Crime/ Cold Calling

One rural resident in the Buchan area was recently approached by two white men in a white vehicle offering to resurface the access road between his home and the nearby public road. One man did most of the talking but the other man appeared to be taking an unusual interest in the resident's home and outbuildings, which raised the resident's concerns. Both of these men had Irish accents.

Another resident, just a few miles away from the first, was also recently approached by a white, middle-aged man in a white vehicle. This man claimed to be from the Council and that they were filling potholes on the nearby public road but that he had some leftover tarmac he was selling. This is not how Council workmen conduct themselves and no work was being done nearby. It also has elements of a typical rogue trader scam.

We would ask that any sightings of men matching these descriptions in similar circumstances be reported to Police Scotland on 101, with details of their descriptions, actions and vehicles, if possible.

Scams

FIFA Lottery Scam

One resident of south Aberdeenshire recently received a letter through the post purporting to be from FIFA. The letter claimed that the resident had won the sum of £900,000 (bait) in a World Cup Lottery Fund. The letter had apparently been sent from an address in Zurich in Switzerland (credibility). It also went into some detail about the nature of the lottery itself and how the resident could start the process of claiming his winnings from an agent in 'Hannover Square, London' (the correct spelling is 'Hanover'). Unfortunately for the sender, this resident has been a reader of these bulletins for quite some time and he knew straight away that it was a scam which had nothing to do with FIFA, primarily as he hadn't entered such a lottery and he was aware of a similar scam some time ago, details of which can be found [here](#)

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Some other points which supported the notion that the letter was a scam which was aimed at charging victims sums of their cash for releasing the (non-existent) winnings in the form of admin fees, customs charges etc. were:

- Missing words: phrases such as 'due to mix up' should have read 'due to a mix up, or 'your name attached to ticket number' should read your name was attached to ticket number (English as a second language or unprofessional use of language)
- The inappropriate use of capital letters on random words mid-sentence and missing full stops at the ends of sentences (it was the norm to use capital letters mid-sentence in the 18th and 19th century, particularly for nouns, but this habit has long since died out) (unprofessional use of language)
- The information contained in the letter should be kept away from the public (secrecy)
- All claims had to be submitted by 31/08/22 (urgency)

Taken together, to the sharp mind it all added up to a fairly unconvincing attempt by scammers to get the resident to contact the 'sender'. An organisation like FIFA would have higher standards than shown in this letter. Thankfully, our resident saw right through the scam and instead filed it under 'B', for bin. We would suggest that anyone else receiving such a letter does the same.

Telephone Scam

A resident of a Local Authority house in the Garioch ward has recently been getting pestered with phone calls on her mobile from a variety of 0330 numbers. The calls can start mid-morning and continue until early evening. The various callers claim to be 'from the Council', in particular the Housing Repair team, wishing to make an appointment for someone to call round to discuss unresolved repairs to her home. The callers have also asked what the resident's home address is.

When the resident asks which Council the caller is calling from, some have become quite abusive and aggressive. Clearly, these calls are not coming from 'the Council' as no Council employee would behave like this for such a simple question. Obviously, if it were a Council employee calling, apart from their manner, the caller would know the address of the person they were contacting.

The truth of the matter is that it is a scam. 0330 numbers are national local rate business numbers which Aberdeenshire Council does not use. The resident believes that the gist of the call is for the caller to obtain her home address with a view to arriving there to commit crime, perhaps as per a bogus caller scenario



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or it may be the calls are to ascertain when the resident is not at home, so that the caller's accomplices can effect a housebreaking at the property.

If you receive calls from a 0330 source, please treat them with caution, do not divulge any personal information to the caller until you are satisfied they are who they say they are (which might not happen in any case). If you suspect a scam, you may wish to tell them you can't speak now ask that they text you with details of their number and who to call back, then forward the text to the 7726 spam text line and report both the call and text to Trading Standards. If the caller becomes abusive, simply hang up and if your phone permits, block the caller's number. If not, there are a number of downloadable apps which will help block unwanted callers but remember to only select one from your phone manufacturer's app store, as these have been vetted by the manufacturer.

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.



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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>