

From mountain to sea

Trading Standards Bulletin

Bulletin No. 53

The articles in these bulletins are based on real life complaints made to Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards department unless otherwise stated to make them as relevant as possible to readers. Names, exact addresses etc. have been withheld to avoid identifying complainants and to comply with GDPR.

Doorstep Crime/ Cold Calling

Nothing to report.

Scams etc.

E-mail scam

One resident of south Aberdeenshire recently received an e-mail apparently from E.ON advising him that he had been the victim in a billing error resulting in the latest payment to E.ON being too large and that he could reclaim the £85 over-paid. There also was a hyperlink in the e-mail for the resident to click on to view details of the overpayment.

The resident knew immediately that the e-mail was a scam as he was not a customer of E.ON, indeed that the matter was nothing at all to do with E.ON. Also, the e-mail had a very basic feel to it with none of the usual graphics which feature on E.ON e-mails.

Some other tell-tale signs of e-mail being a scam were:

- The e-mail address the e-mail came from showed a suffix of 'ne.jp'. The 'ne.jp' service is a Japan based e-mail service where individuals can buy a domain and use an e-mail address with this suffix. E-mails from E.ON normally come with the suffix '@eonenergy.com' or similar
- One line in the e-mail read 'E.ON Refundable Ammount' as opposed to the correct spelling of 'amount'. Basic spelling mistakes is something which a company like E.ON would have picked up and corrected before the e-mail had been sent out
- The @eonhelp channel on Twitter mentioned in the e-mail is no longer in use
- The 'view online' hyperlink, rather than taking a customer to an E.ON website/page, instead takes them to a Japanese website which was blocked to our computers and classed as malware (not a good sign) and clearly has no relation to E.ON.

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Instead, the resident did the right thing by not responding to the e-mail and not clicking on the hyperlink in the e-mail but reported the matter to Trading Standards. The scam e-mail was also forwarded to the National Cyber Security Service e-mail report@phishing.gov.uk for them to follow up. He then rightly consigned the e-mail to his 'Spam' folder.

Rogue Trader

One resident in the Formartine area reported that she had recently employed a gardening company to do some work at her home. The work involved having a new garden path laid. Unfortunately, the resident made the mistake of searching for traders on social media (red flag). A number of traders were contacted and came round to give quotes for the work to be done and soon she settled on one company. This company also stated that they could do the work cheaper than anyone else...(red flag?).

The resident decided to employ this company and agreed to pay for materials up front and pay for labour after the work had been completed. Unfortunately, the company provided no paperwork up front to the resident (definite red flag).

The company started work soon afterwards and it quickly became apparent that the work which was being done was not the work that the resident had requested. When this was pointed out, the workmen became somewhat aggressive, possibly aggravated by the fact that they were consuming alcohol whilst working (another definite red flag).

That evening the resident contacted the supervisor to raise her concerns. Next morning the workmen turned up at the resident's home, quickly became very aggressive, stating that they wouldn't leave and that they would also damage the resident's property until they got paid. Fearing these repercussions, the resident paid the workmen a four figure sum and the men left.

Some points to consider:

- If any workman becomes aggressive with a customer, the customer should report the matter to the Police.
- If a workman or group of workmen become aggressive and refuse to leave a resident's home or garden until they get paid, this is a serious Police matter and may constitute a Breach of the Peace at the very least or Attempted Extortion (or Extortion if the money is paid). The Police should be contacted immediately
- Please don't look for traders on social media. The risk that you'll end up with a scammer is just too high. Rather, speak to friends neighbours who had similar work done and ask them for recommendations. There are also

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a number of 'trusted trader' websites available such as [Which?](#), [Trusted Trader Scotland](#), [Trustatrader.com](#) or [Checkatrade](#) which will greatly reduce the risk of problems (click on the link to go to their pages)

- Once you have settled on a trader, if the contract (even a verbal contract) is agreed at the resident's home, then the resident has a 14 day 'cooling off' period to change their mind at no cost to the resident
- During that period, if you can, go round and see previous projects that trader has worked on, to see the standard of workmanship and the finish and, if possible, speak to the resident about their experience
- The trader should provide the resident with certain types of information about their business in durable form (written or e-mail) before the above contract is agreed. See Bulletin 25 [here](#) for details
- The trader should also provide the resident with a written quote for the work to be done. As with all paperwork from a trader, if things go wrong this could be important evidence, so keep it safe
- Keep records of all payments to traders so in the event of a dispute, proof of payments can be provided. Try to avoid paying in cash as there may be no such proof if the trader doesn't provide a receipt

If in any doubt, please contact Trading Standards using the contact information below.

Misc.

This bulletin frequently refers to rogue traders who claim to be bona fide roofers who then cause monumental headaches to their customers with the sorry standard of work that is done (or sometimes, not done). The Journal of Trading Standards recently featured an article about a rogue roofer from Norwich who got his comeuppance with a substantial jail term for the shocking standard of work he provided to some of his customers. The full article can be read [here](#).

The last few months have seen a huge rise in popularity in the use of disposable vapes across the whole country, particularly amongst young people. Expressions of concern have also started to appear about the impact that this use may have on these young people's health. A recent article in the Journal of Trading Standards highlighted some of these concerns and can be read in full [here](#). It is well worth reading.

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

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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 non-urgent Trading Standards enquiries in Aberdeenshire, please contact Consumer Advice Scotland at <https://www.consumeradvice.scot/> or on 0808 164 6000. For urgent Trading Standards matters, contact Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards at 01467 537222.

Aberdeen City Council's Trading Standards department can be contacted by calling 0300 0200 292 or e-mailing tradingstandards@aberdeencity.gov.uk

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>