

Consumer Alerts – November 2021

Cold callers carrying out property repairs in your neighbourhood.

Home owners looking to have property repairs or home maintenance work carried out are asked to use caution and not to rely on the legitimacy of traders who might be carrying out work at a neighbour's house.

Reports have recently been received from the Lancaster and Rossendale areas where traders carrying out roofing work at one house on the street then cold call other householders. These householders felt they could trust the trader as a neighbour had already employed them. Once the trader had secured a few jobs in the street, begun a small amount of work on each house and secured money up front for materials, the quality of the work being provided began to suffer and the trader left, in some cases not finishing the job.

Always do your research, use local, known trades people and get 3 quotes. Make sure you get names and address details and are provided with a written quote for the work. Remember if you agree to a contract in your own home you should be given cancellation rights of 14 days by the trader in writing.

Trading Standards advice is to always say no to cold callers. The Safetrader scheme can help you find a trader in your area, contact 0303 333 1111 or go to www.safetrader.org.uk

Fraudsters pretending to be a police officer

Lancashire Police are warning of fraudsters telephoning victims pretending to be police officers and fraudulently obtaining cash through what is known as courier fraud. So

far, the reports have been from pensioners in the Blackburn, Lancaster, Preston and Ribble Valley areas.

The resident receives a phone call from a man claiming to be a Police Officer investigating fraudulent activity on their bank account. On one occasion the caller instructed the victim to go to the bank and withdraw €3,500 claiming it was needed as evidence. On their return home a man visited the home address to collect the cash.

Please be aware of this highly sophisticated and devastating scam. If you ever receive a phone call from somebody stating they are a police officer and you are unsure they are who they are claiming to be, you can terminate the call and ring 101 and check that their name and collar number is genuine. Always ensure that you hear a fresh dialling tone because sometimes fraudsters will stay on the line after you think the call has been disconnected and pretend to be a police call handler.

For help and advice about how you can stay safe from scammers visit Action Fraud via www.actionfraud.police.uk or call 0300 123 2040.

Phishing email impersonating a supermarket

Beware of emails claiming to be from a supermarket offering such things as £100 promo awards, £90 confirmed free trial offers or £100 of gift cards for filling out a marketing survey.

These emails pretend to be from well-known supermarkets, in order for the fraudsters to gain your trust, asking for

personal information or getting you to click onto less secure website links.

Parcel delivery fee scams

Residents are warned that a scam text message from someone pretending to be a DPD missed delivery driver is currently doing the rounds. You are provided with a link to follow for a re-delivery. The link then asks for bank details to cover a redelivery charge - it's a very convincing link to a site which copies the real DPD site quite convincingly. Be sure that when you book a redelivery, you are genuinely waiting for a parcel, and the site you click on is the genuine article. Do not input card details for re-deliveries- they are free.

A variation on this scam is an email alleging to come from the post office. If someone is expecting a parcel, this may just trip them up. The message received is as follows or similar: "Your parcel has been redirected to local Post Office branch due to an unpaid shipping fee. Please visit <https://branch-delivery-fees.com> to pay and rebook."

Email scams can be forwarded to report@phishing.gov.uk, then immediately deleted.

Online shopping advice

In the run up to Christmas, shoppers are advised to beware of scam sites or fake products when shopping for a bargain. Fraudulent sites can take your money and never provide the goods or supply fake goods for prices only slightly cheaper than the genuine items.

Think about if the product is something you want, and is it the bargain it might be described to be.

Never disclose security details, such as your PIN or full password

Do not assume an email request or caller is genuine - people aren't always who they say they are.

Do not be rushed .

Listen to your instincts – if something feels

wrong then it is usually right to pause and question it.

Stay in control – have the confidence to refuse unusual requests for information

To avoid inadvertently buying counterfeits: Make sure you check feedback on suppliers before you buy.

Price is a good indicator – be suspicious if the item is considerably cheaper.

Check that the site is secure and provides name and address details - look for the padlock in the address bar when paying.

Remember that if you buy from a company based abroad it is going to be very difficult if not impossible to resolve any problems that might arise with the goods.

Contact the Trading Standards Service via the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133