

Consumer Alerts – December 2022

Beware Cold Callers offering to clean gutters

Residents in the South Ribble area are being warned to be on the alert after reports of cold callers knocking on doors offering to clean gutters. In one case an elderly householder was charged £200 for the gutter work, the traders then found an issue with roof tiles and the repairs cost another £500. No work had been carried out.

Free insulation offers

Residents in East Lancashire have recently been leafleted by traders promising free insulation, doors, windows, and solar panels, along with hundreds of pounds per room to redecorate once any insulation or re-plastering work has been carried out.

Please be aware that there are a number of companies operating in the insulation business at the moment, and while many are legitimate, some appear to be opening limited companies to make agreements, then liquidating them as soon as problems arise.

Insulation and other energy-reducing measures can be a really good step, but the different grant schemes available and what you may be entitled to can be confusing.

Always use caution when dealing with cold callers and remember Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHiL) is a scheme run in partnership with all 15 Lancashire Councils and can provide energy saving measures, advice and support. Contact them regarding your eligibility online at www.chil.uk.com or via telephone on 03306 061488.

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

Fake HSBC text

Beware receiving a text from sender 'PASSCODE' claiming to be from HSBC bank providing you with a onetime pass code for you to approve a payment for a large amount of money. The text invites you to call a number if the payment is not one that you have agreed, hooking worried recipients into phoning the number. On calling the number an automated message asks for your sort code and 16-digit card number or customer identification number before saying you will be put through to an advisor. The last stage may not happen, but the scammers have got personal bank details from you.

Most mobile phone providers are part of a scheme that allows customers to report suspicious text messages for free. Unwanted or scam texts can be reported by forwarding to 7726.

Letter alleging to be from the Chartered Trading Standards Institute.

A Lancashire resident has received a letter addressed to her late husband claiming to be from the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI). The letter falsely claims that a scam is being investigated in relation to a previous investment made by her husband and she will be entitled to a reimbursement of over 60,000 Euros. The resident was asked to pay £4,500 for a supposed licence fee to be able to release the money and was given a deadline for this to be done by.

The CTSI is a membership organisation who do not investigate complaints relating to individuals, the officers name contained in the letter is not employed by the CTSI as an investigating officer and the telephone number provided is not a legitimate CTSI used number.

The service has received a spate of reports about residents receiving letters falsely claiming to be from the CTSI in relation to various alleged investment scams and offering money. Be suspicious, if you receive a letter asking you to ring an official sounding organisation, check independently using the online phone number, not the number provided on the letter.

Christmas Cyber Aware campaign

Launched by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), in partnership with City of London Police and Action Fraud, the campaign aims to promote three key behaviours for the public:

Protect accounts:

Use three random word passwords and set up 2-step verification for email,

Check before buying: Research online retailers to check they're legitimate. Check out online reviews.

Report suspicious activity: Forward texts to 7726; Forward suspicious emails to report@phishing.gov.uk; report scam websites to www.ncsc.gov.uk.

Individuals who think they have been a victim of fraud should contact their bank immediately and report it to Actions Fraud online at www.actionfraud.police.uk or by calling 0300 123 2040.

Updated Product Safety alert: Belling Stoves and New World Gas Cookers with Gas Grill

This Service previously reported a safety risk from the use of certain models of gas cookers if the gas grill was used without the door being open. On Wednesday 2 November, Glen Dimplex Home Appliances issued a public announcement for more than 66,000 gas cookers which pose a significant risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. GDHA is to visit homes containing affected Belling, New World and Stoves cookers to implement a free technical modification so that the operation of the gas grill is made safe. Affected consumers can contact the company immediately to book an appointment.

Until their cookers are made safe, affected consumers must leave the grill door open when in operation.

Consumers must call 0800 110 5728 or email consumersupport@glendimplex.com to register for the free modification. For further information, including the models affected, please see the following websites: www.belling.co.uk/en-gb, www.stoves.co.uk/en-gb, www.newworld.family/safety-notice

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