

Consumer Alerts – December 2020

Beware Doorstep Callers

Residents in Fulwood are advised to be on the alert after reports have been received of a trader offering roof repairs, cold calling in their area, knocking on the doors. Do not believe any claims that tiles are slipping, ridge tiles need pointing, or your chimney is in a poor state unless you can see the damage. Always get a second opinion from a trusted trader. Do not pay money up front, and be very wary if a trader requests the full amount before the job is concluded.

Broadband Cold Caller

Residents are advised to be careful after households in the Ormskirk and Burscough area were targeted by a man wearing a Martin Lewis name tag, who door-knocked and said that he was from one of the bigger telephone companies, and that he could give a cheaper broadband deal than the staff at his own company. Please research deals yourself, do not hand out any personal details to cold callers.

Beware Mattress Sellers

Reports of vans driving around the Thornton Cleveleys area, knocking on doors offering mattresses for sale have been received. On one occasion the seller claimed he had just delivered a mattress two doors down from the householder. On checking, this turned out not to be true, the neighbour had been cold called and offered a mattress for free which they thought was strange and didn't do business with them.

Beware of anyone selling goods door to door, the mattresses may not be of good quality and reports have been received in

the past where the mattress, although it looked new in its packaging, turned out to be second hand.

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

Covid Scam Text Message

Residents in Lancashire have reported receiving a text message claiming to be from GOV.UK stating 'We have issued a payment of £682.76 to all residents as part of our promise to battle COVID-19'. This is a scam, clicking on any associated link may then ask you to provide bank details and personal information. Be suspicious, never respond.

Beware TV Licensing scams

TV Licensing will only phone customers occasionally if there is a problem with their TV licence, and it will usually be about a missed payment, a cancelled Direct Debit or a reminder to renew. Genuine TV Licensing emails and letters are personalised to include details such as your name, partial postcode or licence number. Many scams simply say 'Dear Customer' or use an email address and may have a made-up postcode or licence number. Scams will often say there is a problem with the licence or that the customer is due a refund, to try coax customers into giving their bank details.

TV Licensing have published advice on its website - tvl.co.uk/scams - including a new

downloadable booklet which is full of advice on what to look out for.

Scam Call Alleging to be from a Medical Practice

Residents in the Rossendale area are asked to be on the alert after a patient at local medical practice received a telephone call alleging to be a GP calling from the practice. This was not the case, it was a cold caller from a vitamin / supplement seller.

If you have a problem with scam calls, contact your telephone service provider, many provide extra protections that can reduce the amount of scam calls you receive. Alternatively, or if calls persist, you may wish to investigate installing a call blocker.

Phishing Scam alleging to be from Royal Mail

Beware of a convincing scam email that is currently being circulated. The email asks the recipient to pay a £1.99 fee for an undelivered item of mail. While the sum might seem small, what they actually want is bank account details.

PayPal Scam - Warning to Online Sellers

Nationally, criminals have been targeting people selling items online, by sending them emails purporting to be from PayPal. The emails trick victims into believing they have received payment for the items they're selling on the platform. Typically, after receiving these emails, victims will ship the item to the criminal. This leaves them at a further disadvantage having not received any payment for the item and also no longer being in possession of it.

Don't be persuaded into sending anything until you can verify you've received the payment. A PayPal email will address you by your first and last name, or your

business name, and will never ask you for your full password, bank account, or credit card details in a message.

Online Shopping Advice

Christmas shoppers are being warned not to fall foul of fake products and online scams when looking for a christmas bargain.

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

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.

Scams can be reported to Action Fraud, contact 0300 123 2040 or go to www.actionfraud.police.uk.

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