



From mountain to sea

Trading Standards Scams Bulletin No. 139

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 so please feel free to share the contents with friends, family, neighbours or any community groups you are a part of. For details of scams reported in other parts of Scotland please click on the [Trading Standards Scotland Bulletin page](#).

Bogus Callers and Rogue Traders

One resident in the Formartine area recently had a cold caller attend her front door. This cold caller claimed to be a roofer and expressed concern at the state of the resident's roof.

The resident is elderly and vulnerable and she is not familiar with new technology.

The roofer engaged the resident in conversation about her roof and during the conversation the resident disclosed that she had had work done some time earlier by another roofer which was causing her problems. The roofer advised the resident that he could rectify the problems with her roof and help her get a tax rebate worth several hundred pounds for the work which had been done previously. The resident then accepted this offer.

This roofer has then produced a portable card reader and, on the pretext of arranging the rebate, the resident handed over her card and personal details. This 'roofer' has then taken over £10,000 from the residents account. She had no idea that these readers were for taking payments, not returning them.

Next day, the roofer returned and apparently did some repairs. He also claimed that the rebate had not worked so said that he would try again. He then took a further large sum from the resident's account. This was repeated the next day too, but the resident's bank blocked this third transaction and alerted the resident. The resident later reported the matter and enquiries are ongoing.

Some points to consider:



From mountain to sea

- Although there are many genuine roofers operating in Aberdeenshire, this 'roofer' is not one of them. He is clearly a rogue trader. No roofer can arrange tax rebates for themselves or anyone else. That is a matter reserved only to HMRC,
- As with any type of cold caller, the right response is always 'polite but firm, "Thanks, but no thanks"', and perhaps a "I already have someone who can take care of that for me",
- To avoid this sort of situation, it can be advisable to have your roof checked over annually by a genuine tradesman before any issues become problematic, rather than waiting until repairs need to be done urgently when desperation might drive you towards a rogue trader,
- Genuine roofers continue to be extremely busy with work booked at least 3 to 4 months ahead. It should be a red flag that this roofer was able to start 'work' immediately and come back again the following two days to follow up,
- It is a common tactic amongst rogue traders pretending to be legitimate roofers that they just happened to be passing by and noticed a problem with someone's roof (the good Samaritan). This should be another red flag to any resident – and there will be nothing amiss with the roof,
- This roofer did not offer any written estimates of the work to be done or any invoice after the work was done (although it's unclear if any work was actually done) nor supply any rights of the resident to cancel the agreement – a criminal offence,
- Genuine roofers tend to send their customers an invoice after work has been completed. This 'roofer' had a portable card reader instead which may be a red flag as to his priority; obtaining money from people as quickly as possible,
- Roofing problems are one of the most complained about issues to Aberdeenshire Trading Standards. If you have had an adverse contact with a roofing rogue trader, please report the matter to us,
- Conversely, if you have had a genuine tradesman do good work for you if you can, encourage them to sign up to Aberdeenshire's Trusted Trader scheme at [Aberdeenshire Trusted Trader application form | Trading Standards](#)

Scams etc.

Telephone Scam

One resident in the Garioch area recently reported to Aberdeenshire Trading Standards that he had received a call from a male claiming to work for 'Work and Pensions' and that the resident could qualify for a substantial payment as he



From mountain to sea

suffered from a long term disability. This male had a foreign, possibly south Asian accent, and was calling from a land line with the area code of 0113.

The caller then went on to ask about the resident's bank account details, at which time he became suspicious that the caller was a scammer, so the resident hung up and reported the matter.

A search on the reverse phone call look-up service Who Called Me shows that the caller's number appears to be based in Leeds, England, it had been active for about 3 weeks, had been looked up 250 times and had 4 previous reports attached to it relating to silent phone calls. The resident did the right thing by simply hanging up at that point and reporting the matter.

Some points to consider:

- Never share your bank account, bank card or credit card details with any cold caller on the phone,
- If they claim to represent an official body such as a Government department, ask them to write to you with confirmation of this. Do not provide them with any personal information to help them do this. If they are genuine, they should already have this information,
- Staff from the DWP do not routinely call people up to tell them that they are eligible for a payment. Claimants normally have to initiate their own claims. Much more likely that the caller is a scammer and the 'payment' is simply a hook intended to get you to disclose personal or banking information so that the scammer can misuse this information at your expense,
- Staff from the DWP will not ask you for your banking information,
- Be particularly suspicious if the caller tries to rush you or alarm you into acting,
- If still unsure, call the DWP via a number obtained from their website to query the matter (<https://www.gov.uk/disability-service-centre>),
- Please do not call the cold caller's number back. This just invites more trouble,
- Although the Caller ID of the call advises that the area code was Leeds, in truth the scammer could have been anywhere on Earth and was using computer technology to spoof his phone number to look like a Leeds number,
- If in doubt, do as this resident did – simply hang up. No fuss, no arguments; just hang up,
- Please remember to report the matter to your local Trading Standards office so that they can provide any advice needed and warn other people.



From mountain to sea

Misc.

Trading Standards firmly believes that as so many scammers are based abroad, where neither UK law nor UK banks can reach, and as they contact their victims through the internet, whether it be for the purposes of phone, text, e-mail or social media scams, that education and self-education about these scams is essential so that people are able to spot and avoid falling victim to them when they arise. This has been the core objective of this bulletin since issue number 1.

To that end, there are a number of very useful sources of information about scams besides this bulletin. Over the next few issues, we would like to highlight some of these to our readers.

The first of these sources is the [Take Five website](#). On the 'Protect Yourself' tab are detailed a substantial numbers of scam types and how they are perpetrated, from Identity Theft to Romance Scams to Ticket Scams. The whole index of these scams can be found by clicking on the link [here](#).

We would respectfully suggest that if you have a few spare minutes that a visit to these webpages would be time well spent.

Conclusion

Please note that the advice given in these bulletins has been deliberately kept simple, so that if you are faced with such a scenario where fear, alarm and panic are tools often used deliberately by scammers, you will know what to do at that time.

If you have been the victim of a Bogus Caller or other form of scam, please report the matter to Consumer Advice Scotland so that Trading Standards can maintain a detailed picture about scammers operating in 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

From mountain to sea

For non-urgent Trading Standards enquiries in Aberdeenshire, please contact Consumer Advice Scotland at <https://consumeradvice.scot/contact/> or call them on 0808 164 6000.

For urgent Trading Standards matters or doorstep crime matters, contact Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards at 01467 537222 or via tradingstandards@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

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 the [Friends Against Scams website](#) or [Take Five](#) at their website.

Please direct any media queries to news@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or 01467 538222 during office hours.

All previous Trading Standards bulletins can be found on the Aberdeenshire Council website on the [Trading Standards Scams Bulletin page](#).

Follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/TradingStandardsAberdeenshire>