

From mountain to sea

Doorstep Callers and Scams

Bulletin No. 106

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

Nothing to report.

Scams etc.

Solar Panel scam

Trading Standards were recently contacted by a resident in the Deeside area who wished to report an unusual incident. This resident has solar panels fitted to her home and has had for over 10 years, all without any problems.

Just a few weeks ago, this resident was contacted at home by a male claiming to work for a solar panel company who claimed that there may be issues with her solar panel installation. Not knowing much about the technical side of solar panel installation, the resident allowed the male to explain what he meant.

Unfortunately, the resident later invited the caller into her home to hear what he had to say in more detail. This man then claimed that there was no voltage optimiser fitted to the house and one was required for the solar panel system to work correctly. It was also noted that the male was quite pushy and insisted on explaining the 'science' of why an optimiser was needed. Eventually, the resident gave in and agreed to have one fitted.

The male then immediately produced a contactless terminal and took payment from the resident's credit card for almost £2500. Arrangements were then made for a technician to attend at a later date and fit the optimiser.

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A few days later, as she was still unsure about the whole affair, the resident spoke to an electrician she knew and asked his advice. His advice was that, as her solar panels had worked without issue for so long, he believed nothing needed to be done to them, that she did not need a voltage optimiser and that even if she did need one, it should only cost a few hundred pounds to buy. The resident then contacted her credit card company and reported the matter. The credit card company cancelled the payment to the company the man worked for and issued a new credit card to the resident. She then cancelled the technician from attending her home.

In truth, this was all a scam centering on the resident's unfamiliarity with the technical aspects of her solar panels and the salesman's pushy and domineering manner wearing her down into agreeing to buy an optimiser.

Some points to consider:

- If, like this resident, you receive a phone call from someone you've never dealt with before about your solar panels and they claim there is a problem with the panels, take mental note of the points they raise, thank them and hang up. Be polite but firm and say 'no, thanks',
- If the caller comes to the door, it's still 'no thanks', firm but polite, then close and lock the door,
- If the phone call or doorstep caller causes you any concern, contact the company who did the installation and seek their advice in the first instance,
- If the above is not possible, try to speak to a reliable local tradesman and seek their advice. It is important that you proactively seek out the tradesman rather than simply accepting the word of a stranger on the back of a phone call or cold caller. Remember, you really don't know who the caller is and what their real motives are,
- Bear in mind if there have been no problems with your solar panels thus far, any such claims the caller makes is likely to be nonsense,
- Don't let any caller bamboozle you with science or technology. If you're not sure, it's all the more reason to say 'no',
- The fact that the male had a contactless card reader could be seen as an indication that his priority was to make sales, not out of concern for the resident's solar panels working properly,
- The company name given by the male is unknown on Companies House website. Companies with a similar name were either dissolved a number of years ago or are not in the business of solar panel installations,
- One way of deflecting the situation is to say that you don't deal with the money in the household. Put the caller off by telling them it's someone else who does that, (if possible, someone who might find it easier to stand

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up to any bullying or coercion). Try to get them to come back or call back at a later time when you have a family member, friend or neighbour present and they can help you say 'no',

- If the caller won't leave your doorstep, tell them you'll call the Police. If they still won't leave, do it,
- If you have no other option but to make a payment, use your credit card, as you should have Section 75 protection if the payment is over £100, but it can also buy you time to get rid of the caller and report them to Police, Trading Standards and your credit card issuer to get the transaction cancelled,
- Alternatively, write them a cheque, to get them away from your doorstep, then cancel the cheque as quickly as you can. Consider using the Stop Scams UK banking short code of 159 to call your bank to do so,
- NEVER let these people into your home. Doing so allows them to settle in and get comfy for the long haul in wearing your resistance down. Instead, treat them like any other unknown doorstep caller,
- Remember to report incidents like this to Trading Standards, even if you don't fall victim, so that we can keep track of them.

Misc.

Friends Against Scams are pleased to announce that their Doorstep Crime leaflet has been translated into 13 different languages to better serve our diverse communities. The leaflet is now available in:

- Arabic
- Bengali
- Gujarati
- Hindi
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Punjabi
- Romanian
- Simplified Chinese
- Spanish
- Traditional Chinese
- Urdu
- Welsh

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These translations ensure that more residents can access important information about preventing doorstep crime in a language they understand. Friends Against Scams believe this initiative will significantly enhance community safety and awareness.

Please find all the different versions of the leaflet available on the Resources and Materials section of the Scam Champion area of the Friends Against Scams website:

<https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/news-and-updates/doorstep-crime-awareness-in-14-languages>



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.



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Contact Info

For non-urgent Trading Standards enquiries in Aberdeenshire, please contact the [Consumer Advice Scotland](#) website or call them 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 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](#).