

From mountain to sea

Trading Standards Scams Bulletin No. 117

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

A resident in the Kincardine area was at home recently when she had a cold caller at the door. When the resident answered she found two men on the doorstep.

One of the men immediately told the resident that they weren't selling anything. The resident pointed to a 'No Cold Callers' sticker by her front door. The man then repeated that they weren't selling anything but were in the area, cleaning people's roofs. He also claimed that they were currently doing work for a neighbour. The resident asked the men if the cleaning was free, the man repeated that they weren't selling anything, but that their leaflet was free. He was quite aggressive and belligerent, so the resident closed the door on them.

The matter was later reported to Trading Standards and, it turns out, the company the men work for is well-known to Trading Standards, and not in a good way.

Some points to consider, aside from the company being known to Trading Standards:

- The talkative man's claim that they were not selling anything was factually untrue. They were in fact selling, or trying to sell, a service, i.e. the roof cleaning,
- The claim that the cold callers were doing work for a nearby neighbour is a common, and dishonest, tactic used by scammers. In this instance there was no such neighbour,
- The talkative man's claim that as he thought they weren't selling anything, they could ignore the 'No Cold Callers' sticker is nonsense. No cold



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callers means NO cold callers and includes salesmen, canvassers, charity collectors etc. as well as rogue traders,

- If the talkative man's claim about working for a neighbour was false, his aggressive and belligerent behaviour may constitute an unfair commercial practice under the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 and could be an offence under Section 237 of that Act. This offence is dealt with by Trading Standards rather than Police Scotland,
- Proving the above offence would involve the gathering of evidence such as eyewitness accounts of the incident, video footage from doorbell cameras, and any paperwork handed over by the caller. It is also relevant to determine whether they resident had 'No Cold Callers' stickers at the door and whether other similar notices such as signs on garden or driveway gates, which were also ignored,
- As with any other cold caller, whether it is at the door, on the phone or by text or e-mail, the right response is 'thanks, but no thanks',
- Trading Standards are keen to receive reports of doorstep callers who disregard 'No Cold Callers' stickers or signs. Contact details are at the end of this Bulletin.

Scams etc.

Telephone Scam

A resident in the Garioch area recently reported receiving a phone call from "Jo, the Energy Advisor." Jo began by asking if the resident was the homeowner. After this was confirmed, she explained that the call was regarding the resident's "recent roof insulation inspection." Jo then asked whether the inspection had taken place within the last 18 months and if the resident was "ready to proceed."

The resident asked Jo which company she was ringing from, at which point Jo ended the call. The resident then called Jo's number back. This was shown on the Caller ID as being an '020' London number. When the call was answered by Jo, the resident got the same spiel from her as per the initial phone call she'd received. The resident again asked Jo which company she worked for and again the call was ended.

The resident called Jo's number once more. When the call was answered she again received the same message as the previous two times from Jo. It was at this point that resident realised the 'Jo' was an AI program and hung up.

The matter was later reported to Trading Standards. Our enquiries on Who Called Me revealed that the number Jo used belongs to a London-based telephony company called TAP Gateway. The number has been looked up 180 times and flagged 6 times for suspected involvement in energy or insulation



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scams. It is likely that a third-party scam operation is renting the line from TAP Gateway, which appears to have no direct involvement in the scam. The caller did not collect or record the resident's personal details.

This incident confirms that AI is now routinely used in telemarketing—and increasingly in scam operations. It also highlights how some AI programs, like Jo, have limited capacity for meaningful interaction due to algorithmic constraints. However, other reports suggest that more advanced AI systems can engage in sophisticated and realistic conversations.

What this incident confirms though is that AI is being used routinely for telemarketing purposes and now even for scam purposes. It also suggests that some AI programs are not capable of fully interacting with people beyond the limitations of their algorithms, as in Jo's case, but other reports suggest that higher spec AI programs are almost fully capable of doing so.

Without getting too hung up on the AI aspect, whether AI or human cold caller, our advice remains the same:

- If you get a similar call as this one, please be aware that it may be a scam,
- Please do not divulge any personal information to a cold caller over the phone, no matter who they say they are, AI or human. They may be lying.
- In particular, never divulge any financial information to a cold caller on the phone and never discuss your finances,
- Try to note down the caller's phone number from the Caller ID. Once the call is over, call 1471 and try to note down the number that service provides for the call. Compare these numbers,
- Note also the time and date of the call, the company who the call is made for, if provided, and the gist of the call too,
- Please do not call these numbers back. In this instance it was quite informative but in other instances you may be giving a scammer another opportunity to scam you. You may also be put onto a high tariff phone line being charged £3 per minute while you wait for an answer,
- Instead, please simply report the matter to your local Trading Standards office for their consideration.

Misc.

Stop Press

In the last two bulletins, we reported on a cold caller described by witnesses as a scruffy man lacking any sales skills, approaching residents at their homes to promote "green" technologies such as solar panels and insulation. The latest



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information suggests he has recently been active in the Turriff area. Our advice remains unchanged: in a nutshell, it's "Thanks but no thanks". Please also try to note the man's car registration number then report it to Trading Standards using the contact information below.

We also mentioned in Bulletin 115 scam texts people were receiving, apparently from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) relating to Winter Fuel Allowance or an Energy Allowance with promises of £300 payments. As predicted, these texts have continued, with the cut off dates in the body of the text advancing as the year goes on. However, our advice is still to report them to Trading Standards and to telephony providers by marking them as spam or junk. Please do not reply to the sender in case they target you with more texts.

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

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.



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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](#).