

## COLD CALLING ADVICE FROM THE POLICE

Rogue Traders are people who pretend to be builders needing to do 'urgent' repairs or sales people offering bargain products. They often pressurize householders to pay in advance for materials or do poor work at highly inflated prices.

They will often cold call on vulnerable households and deliberately overcharge for unsatisfactory goods and services. This can include charging for unnecessary work, damaging property deliberately in order to obtain money, leaving work unfinished and intimidating householders.

Victims of this practice are often vulnerable or elderly and in the most serious cases, offenders will return to the same victim again and again until their savings are exhausted.

Our recommended advice on tackling doorstep rogue traders includes:

- o Close and lock your back door before answering the front door.
- o Use a spy hole, chain or window to have a look at the caller before answering the door. If you do not recognise them speak through the closed and locked door.
- o Display a No Cold Calling sticker on your door - these are free and available from your local Safer Neighbourhood Team.
- o Never buy goods and services from people calling at your door.
- o If the caller is selling something or offering work on your house or garden tell them that you are not interested and ask them to leave.
- o If they do not leave tell them you will call the police.
- o Always ask for proof of identity. Take it from the person (through the letterbox) and read it carefully.
- o Phone the company or organisation the caller claims to be from (use the number in the phone book) to confirm their identity.
- o If you have any doubt – keep them out.

If you do need to employ a tradesman, please remember these useful tips:

- o Avoid any cold callers that may turn up or ring unexpectedly or unannounced offering to carry out repairs.
- o When seeking a reliable trader, talk to family, friends and neighbours to get recommendations, or look for a Trust mark-registered firm. Details of accredited traders in your area are available from Norfolk Trusted Trader. Report any unscrupulous traders either to police or Trading Standards.
- o Ask traders to provide you with written contact details, and consider getting written quotes (not estimates) from at least three traders. Ask about insurance backed guarantees.
- o Consumer law allows you a seven day cooling off period so you can change your mind about any service offered by someone who arrives uninvited or by appointment.
- o Keep back part of the cost until the repair job has been satisfactorily completed. This will provide an incentive for the trader to complete the job or put right any problems.

## Check identity cards carefully

Bogus callers are conmen or women who use a variety of stories to get into a person's home with the sole intention of stealing from them.

They most often pose as official callers from a local authority or utility company, for example "the Gas Board", "the Water Board" or electricity company, and will claim they need to check for a leak, read the meter or check electric sockets. Some may also claim to need assistance, for example need a glass of water or to use the phone.

Also known as distraction burglars, they can often work in pairs with one spinning a story to distract the householder at the front door while their accomplice enters the home to steal.

Bogus callers succeed because they sound believable, so don't be fooled. Make sure in your own mind that they are whom they claim to be by following these simple steps:

- o Stop, Chain and Check. Think before you open the door - use your spy hole, chain or look out of the window to see if you recognise them.
- o Ask callers for proof of identity. Genuine tradesmen should carry an identification card with their photograph on. Utilities companies now offer a password identification system which means any callers from one of these companies should be able to give a pre-arranged password as additional proof of identity.
- o Check identity cards carefully. If you are unsure, telephone the company the caller claims to represent, (use a number from telephone directory and not any number they might give you). Remember, the vast majority of callers to your door will be genuine, therefore they will not mind you carrying out checks to make sure they are who they say they are.
- o Beware of callers who attempt to distract you by claiming that they have seen something untoward in your rear garden or somewhere which may encourage you to leave your house - they may have an accomplice awaiting this distraction.
- o If you are not convinced of the identity of the caller, don't let them in. Ask the caller to come back later and arrange for a friend, relative or neighbour to be present on their return or ask the caller to contact this person.

Treat every stranger with caution. If you are still worried, dial 999 immediately and ask for the police.