

Information Network Bulletin

Autumn 2011

Welcome to the latest edition of the Information Network Bulletin brought to you by Croydon Trading Standards. It includes details of some of the latest scams and fraud alerts that we have become aware of in recent months. We hope that you find it useful.



Debt Scam Warning

Mobile phone owners are being warned about scam text messages that claim to help them become debt free.

Trading Standards team have been alerted to a significant increase in the numbers of texts, emails and adverts from debt and claims management companies that misleadingly state they can take over liability for debts, write off debts or get compensation for accidents.

These text messages are often a ploy by fraudsters to gain personal information such as bank details.

Never reply to unsolicited text messages such as these. Even responding 'STOP' to try to opt out of the messages can confirm to the fraudsters that your phone number is a working number. Never give out personal details in response to unsolicited text messages.

If you do have a problem with debt or a claim

for compensation, contact a reputable claims management company or your local debt advice service.

Winter is on its way – be prepared!

Most of us don't wait until we're ill or have a bad toothache before we decide to register ourselves with a doctor or dentist ... so why should our homes be any different? As the nights draw in and the weather starts to turn, be prepared for any loose tiles or guttering that may occur

Speak to friends, neighbours and nearby relatives and put together a list of key traders that you can call if you suddenly find you have a problem.

By preparing now you can be confident in the work they have done for people you know, check traders out to ensure they are members of trade associations, etc, and not find yourself randomly choosing someone from the phonebook because you have an emergency and don't have time to do any checks.

Similarly, if a rogue trader calls at your home to advise you that you have a loose tile, etc, that they can conveniently repair for you, you can thank them for letting you know and inform them that you will get your usual builder in to repair it.



Doorstep and Telephone Drainage Scam

Croydon residents are being warned of a common drainage scam which has resurfaced again in Croydon.

An elderly resident at Bensham Lane received a cold call knock at his front door towards the end of August. The male who knocked on his front door falsely claimed to be from Dynorod and warned that one of his neighbour's houses (which backed onto his property) was having major drainage problems and that this would adversely affect his property. In order to rectify the situation the rogue trader asked for a £900 deposit in order to dig up his garden and put in new drains at a total cost £1,500.

The resident was then contacted by telephone only a few hours later following the knock on the door and was told to go to the bank to deposit the monies for the work. Thankfully this telephone call alerted his suspicions and he refused to make any payments. Despite this, a further telephone call was received the next day, although again he did not respond to their requests and reported the matter to the authorities.

Unfortunately this sort of scam is designed to catch people off their guard as they are led to believe a neighbour is experiencing problems and the work is urgent; they may feel pressured or responsible in some way.

Residents are asked to be especially wary of this type of scam particularly when cold called (at home or on the telephone). If you have any concerns or suspicions do not deal with these people and report the matter immediately to Consumer Direct for advice on **08454 04 05 06**

Trading standards and Shirley Safer Neighbourhood Police are warning of a telephone scammer claiming to be from the Ministry of Justice. The cold caller states that he has a £2,500 cheque ready to be released. In exchange all the resident had to do was to arrange for a £99 UKash electronic money voucher administration charge.

The caller even arranged for a time for collection of the admin charge, stating that in return they would hand over the cheque for £2,500. The resident became suspicious and called her Safer Neighbourhood Police team who in turn contacted Trading Standards.

The officers waited for the caller to arrive, but at the allotted time the consumer received a further telephone call asking for the reference number to the money transfer voucher (sufficient to cash the voucher) and then they would put the cheque in the post to her. The resident wisely declined.

The Ministry of Justice says it would never contact people by phone and ask for their bank details. The callers are not connected with the Ministry of Justice, and appear to be collecting personal data to use it for criminal ends. The Ministry warns people not to give personal details to such callers.

If you have given your bank details to a caller like this, please contact your bank as soon as possible to check for unauthorised transactions.

Postal Scams Warning



Croydon residents are once again encouraged to continue to be vigilant against scam postal mailings and to report any incidents. Residents continue to receive large numbers of junk mail and scam post.

Some recent scams reported to Trading Standards involve mailings with imitation cheques written out in the customer's names and encouraging them to claim their prize money by sending payment by cheque or, more alarmingly, asking for credit/debit card numbers including expiry dates and three digit security code, a scam aimed at gaining people's card details and monies.

Another recurring scam aimed at getting money from victims has been psychic prediction scams. Letters and leaflets purporting to be from clairvoyants, parapsychologists, and telepathists who claim good fortune and money await the recipient who is supposedly 'selected out of thousands' for special gifts of fortune or good luck. Again each claim request that customers send payment to either secure the 'good fortune' or 'prevent the impending disaster.' They also seek to gain customer's personal details and card details.

Other common mailings which are prevalent are small catalogues selling household goods and hardware or plants with claims of prize draw winnings or encouraging ordering of items in order to gain entry to prize draws.

If you suspect you've been had by a scam, don't let embarrassment or fear prevent you from seeking advice or reporting it. Millions of people are taken in every year. Call Consumer Direct for advice on **08454 04 05 06**

Further more detailed information on scams and consumer advice can be found online at

http://www.consumerdirect.gov.uk/watch_out/Scams/

Telephone Scammers claiming to be from The Office of Fair Trading (OFT)

Scams are schemes designed to con you out of your money, and telephone scams are becoming increasingly common.

One such scam is bogus callers claiming to be from the Office of Fair Trading asking for money to get your bank charges refunded. This is a scam as The Office of Fair Trading will never telephone you to do this.

If you receive such a call you should not pay them any money or give out any personal details.

For more advice about this scam, or to report one, please call Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06.

Keep Warm but Keep Safe.



The government are encouraging energy companies to get their customers to improve the insulation in their homes. Many companies are doing this by offering grants if you have your loft or walls insulated by them.

However, rogues are aware of this and are jumping on the bandwagon, calling on people at home saying that they are from the energy companies, or even the council, and that they are offering grants for insulation. They will usually try to gain access to your loft there and then to carry out a survey. Whilst you accompany one to the loft, the other has access to your belongings.

So be warned. Companies working with the Council will send out letters in advance to announce that the company will be calling in your area; also, their operators work alone, not in pairs.

If you want to find out about grants to insulate your home, contact your energy provider and ask what they can offer. That way you are in control of who calls on you and when, so you won't get caught off guard.



Gone (ph)ishing!

Many of you will be familiar with the "phishing" e-mail style of scam whereby you receive an e-mail from your ("a") bank asking you to confirm your bank account details. These look like they come from the bank but are of course a scam to get hold of your bank details and drain the account.

There are many variations on this scam. One resident recently received a text message on their phone. This claimed to be from Virgin and alleged that a sum of money was owing on the bill which had to be paid off. This was not true. The text was not from Virgin and there was no money owing.

Remember never...

- ✓ **Never** give out bank details to cold callers either by phone or online...
- ✓ Your bank may contact you by e-mail but they will never ask you to confirm your user name or password by clicking on a link in an email and visiting a website.
- ✓ Information may be passed to you by text message by service providers but they should not be asking you to phone a number and pay money in this way

REMEMBER many people may want to part you and your money through modern day formats for communication – mobile phones / texts / e-mails / social networks... better you save that money for summer's days fishing by the riverbank in your retirement!



A missed parcel delivery?

HOLD THAT CALL!!!!

We are all familiar with the royal mail card through the door when you've missed a parcel delivery. It gives details of the local royal mail office and opening times for collection. Quite often there is a telephone number there to call the local royal mail office if you need to.

However, some people have started receiving leaflets through the door for "private delivery firms" such as "Parcel Delivery Service" / "PDS".

These leaflets state that you have missed a parcel delivery and need to contact them on a number such as "0906 6611911". **Do not call!** You will hear a recorded message and receive a huge phone bill rather than a huge parcel!

If this happens call Royal Mail Fraud on 0207 239 6655 or "Payphone Plus" at <http://www.phonepayplus.org.uk/> and, of course, Trading Standards! Payphone Plus regulates premium rate calls.

If you would like a copy of our Doorstep Selling Advice pack for residents, please call Trading Standards on **020 8407 1311**

If you represent a community group or similar organisation and would like a talk by a Trading Standards officer, please call us on **020 8407 1311**



Olympic Tickets

Important information from the Metropolitan Police's Operation Podium to consider if you are buying an Olympic Games or Paralympic Games ticket:

- The only secure way to buy a ticket is from the [London 2012 ticketing website](#), or your country's National Olympic Committee or National Paralympic Committee. These details can be found on the official London 2012 ticketing website.

- Don't buy a ticket from an unauthorised website or tout. It may be a scam and you risk not getting the ticket you wanted and paid for. Your credit card details may also be stolen for use in other crimes

- If you aren't sure whether the site is authorised to sell you a ticket, use the [London 2012 website checker](#).

- If you buy a ticket you can no longer use, you can check whether it can be resold through the authorised ticket reseller you originally purchased the tickets from or via London 2012.

Travel packages will also be available for residents outside the UK through National Olympic Committees and National Paralympic Committees. Always check the terms and conditions to see what you are being sold.

There is specific legislation relating to the sale of tickets for the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

If you find tickets for sale from any unauthorised source at anytime, don't buy them. They are not genuine. Report it to London 2012 via brandprotection@london2012.com



Trading Standards warn of fake alcohol and counterfeit goods

Croydon Trading Standards are warning both consumers and traders about counterfeit goods.

Croydon Trading Standards will be carrying out a project checking goods in small shops across the borough. They will be carrying out enforcement visits to small shops, such as off-licences and small independent grocers, during September and October.

Trading Standards will be visiting the premises with officers from Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs, who will also be checking stock to ensure that the correct rates of duty have been paid on cigarettes and alcohol.

Retailers have already received an advisory bulletin outlining how they can avoid inadvertently purchasing counterfeit stock and passing it on to their customers.

In July this year, there was an industrial explosion at a filtration plant in Boston, Lincolnshire which killed five men and seriously injured another. The plant housed a filtration plant that was being used for the production of illicit alcohol. This was then being distributed and sold as Passion Vodka, Grand Duke Vodka and counterfeit Smirnoff vodka.

Samples taken from the site were found to contain chemicals unsafe for human consumption.

Counterfeit goods are being offered for sale to traders by callers in white vans. Items which have commonly be found to be counterfeit includes spirits such as vodka, cigarettes, condoms and batteries.

Recent examples of counterfeit alcohol found by Trading Standards across the country include: Blossom Hill wine, Echo Falls wine, Jacob’s Creek wine, Smirnoff vodka and Glen’s vodka.

Trading Standards are advising traders to always purchase their stock from reputable suppliers and never to buy stock from itinerant traders selling items from white vans.

If you think you have purchased a counterfeit item contact:

Trading Standards on 020 8407 1311 or by email on trading_standards@croydon.gov.uk

or Consumer Direct on



“Bling” Dummies



Croydon traders are being alerted to the potential dangers posed by the so-called ‘Bling’ Dummies.

The dummies are decorated with a variety of beads and gems and come in a variety of colours.

There are strict safety standards which prevent adhesive labels and decorations from being fixed to dummies.

The dummies are a popular accessory for babies and young children particularly for special occasions.

Croydon Trading Standards is appealing to traders to remove any such dummies from sale. They have been found around the country and online. Wherever these dummies are found they will be removed from sale.



Help us stop loan sharks now.

With an estimated 310,000 households in the UK borrowing from unlicensed lenders or loan sharks as they are more commonly known, illegal money lending is a problem across the country. Anyone who operates a money lending business without a licence from the Office of Fair Trading is acting illegally. The England Illegal Money Lending Team are cracking down on unlicensed lenders who...

- Rarely offer paperwork so those who borrow from them are kept in the dark about how much they still owe.
- Can charge extortionate rates of interest-rates of 131,000% APR have been seen.
- Add additional amounts to the debt so the borrowers struggle to repay.
- Take items as security. These items could even include passports and bank cards.
- Resort to extreme methods to reclaim their debts. This could mean threats, intimidation, violence or worse.

One victim spoke out “I couldn’t afford to pay my bills and the rent as I had to pay the loan shark so life was getting pretty desperate. He said ‘pay me don’t feed the children.’ The kids have been subjected to a hostel and attended five schools. It nearly cost me my marriage”

Loan sharks are not a community service and should never be used under any circumstances. Many loan sharks start out as a friend to their borrower but quickly change.

If you have borrowed from an unlicensed lender you have not broken the law, they have. Speak to us in confidence.

To report a loan shark:

Call the 24/7 confidential hotline 0300 555 2222

Text ‘loan shark + your message’ to 60003

E-mail

reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk

Log-on to www.direct.gov.uk/stoploansharks



On your marks, get set, go! National Consumer Week is nearly upon us.

This annual event, organised by the Trading Standards Institute, is a great opportunity for our team to champion the ‘Good Sports Don’t Fake it’ campaign.

Using the London Olympics as a springboard, Croydon Trading Standards are aiming to counter the anticipated rise in the attempted sale of fake goods that will inevitably result from the biggest sporting event on earth coming to town as well as Team GBs recent successes in various disciplines including cricket, cycling, rowing and sailing.

We’ll be manning a number of displays at locations around the borough including sports events, shopping and community centres.

Schools will be receiving packs to raise our younger consumers’ awareness of the related areas of fakes and scams that include fake branded items like sportswear and equipment; fake websites and tickets and Olympic lottery scams.

We’ll also be providing clear guidance and signposting for consumers along with some exciting new websites that help you find out if you’ve unwittingly bought fakes.

National Consumer Week takes place from 21st to 25th November 2011. So, look out for more news coming your way!

Product Recalls

Product Recall is a process of retrieving defective goods from consumers and providing those consumers with compensation. Recalls often occur as a result of safety concerns over a manufacturing defect in a product that may harm its user.

Manufacturers and retailers publish safety recalls in the national press, on their respective websites and at retail outlets.

Consumer protection legislation stipulates specific requirements with regard to product recalls to include situations in which a recall is compulsory (usually because the risk is big enough) and penalties for failure to recall.

A manufacturer or retailer may also initiate a recall voluntarily.

Some recent examples of UK Product Recalls



Recalled 05/09/11

Bosch, Neff or Siemen
Dishwashers

The following notice has been issued by the manufacturer:

**Bosch, Neff or Siemens Dishwasher
(purchased 1999 – 2005)**

**Important Safety Notice - Potential Fire
Hazard**

Dishwasher Repair Action

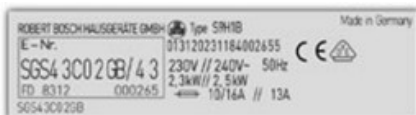
BSH Home Appliances Limited has announced an in-home repair programme of certain dishwashers manufactured between 1999 and early 2005. The affected dishwashers are in the batch number range from FD 7901 to FD 8504.

Dishwashers which are outside the above batch number range are not affected.

To find out if your dishwasher is included in this repair action go to www.repairaction.co.uk and enter the model number and batch number which can be found either engraved on the top or on a sticker on the left hand side of the inner part of the door.

NOTE: Pay special attention to the batch number (FD) of your dishwasher because not all dishwashers of the same model are included.

The E-NR (model number) and FD (batch) number will be located on a rating plate that looks like this.

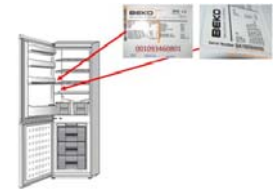


OR

Contact our call centre on freephone 0800 561 0082 or arrange a callback with BSH Customer Service. Opening hours are Mon – Fri 7am to 10pm and Sat – Sun 8am to 8pm.

Recalled 01/09/11

Beko Frost Free Fridge
Freezers



The following notice has been re-issued with amendments by the manufacturer.

IMPORTANT SAFETY WARNING

**BEKO FROST FREE FRIDGE FREEZERS
MANUFACTURED 2000-2006 ONLY**

In a very small number of cases we have found that the defrost timer on a certain product range of Beko frost free freezers can fail, overheat and cause a potential fire hazard. As a responsible manufacturer, we are doing all we can to contact the owners of affected models and make the required modification, free of charge.

**WE STRONGLY URGE YOU TO CHECK
YOUR MODEL USING THE CHART AND TO
CONTACT US IF YOU OWN AN AFFECTED
MODEL**

Call **FREEPHONE 0800 009 4837** or visit
www.beko.co.uk (opens in a new window)

**If you have an affected model which has or
develops a fault, or is not working
properly, please unplug the product
immediately and call Beko.**

The models affected, listed below, were manufactured between January 2000 and October 2006. Both the model number and the serial number can be found on the rating plate (see diagram above) Please contact us if your model's serial number begins with any of the following:

00, 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06.

CDA543FX	CA5411FFS	CDA752FS
CDA645FW	CA5411FFW	CDA752FW
CDA647FS	CA5411FFX	CDA752FX
CDA647FW	CA7014FFX	CS460FF (W)
CDA648FS	CA7015FFS	CS460FFS
CDA648FW	CA7015FFW	CS460FFSD
CDA653FS	CA7015FFX	CS461FFW
CDA653FW	CDA539FS	CS461FFS
CDA653FX	CDA539FW	CSA4706FFX
CDA659FS	CDA539FX	CSB4606FFS
CDA751FS	CDA543FS	CSB4606FFSD
CDA751FX	CDA543FW	CSB4606FFW

Further detail can be found on our website, www.beko.co.uk (opens in a new window), where you can also check if your product is affected by entering the model and serial number.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO IF YOU OWN AN AFFECTED PRODUCT

If you own an affected product, or if you are unsure if your product is affected, call our free phone number **0800 009 4837** between **8.00am and 8.00pm**, open **7 days a week**. Please have the model and serial number of your product home and make the required modification, free of charge.

ready when you call, if necessary, we will arrange for one of our trained engineers to visit your

The safety of all our products is our highest priority; all are independently tested to meet UK and European safety standards.

NO OTHER BEKO BRANDED REFRIGERATORS OR PRODUCTS ARE AFFECTED.



Recalled 16/08/11

Mothercare Xcursion Travel System – safety notice.

The code can be found on the car seat base

Colours	Batch codes affected
Black Denim	20100802-17
	20101019-19
	20101229-22
	20100126-23
	20110514-25
Stone Safari	20100923-18
Khaki Twill	20101215-21
	201011115-20

The following notice has been issued by the retailer:

Mothercare - Important safety notice

As a result of routine checks, we have identified that in some cases the car seat fabric used on the Mothercare Xcursion Travel System does not include the correct fire retardant treatment.

This affects customers who purchased a Mothercare Xcursion Travel System between 1st September 2010 and 19th July 2011 and matches one of the batches noted below.

If you have not yet received a letter from Mothercare please speak to a member of store staff to arrange your replacement cover or discuss alternative options.

Until then you can continue to use the car seat, but we advise customers to be extra vigilant - keeping the car seat away from direct sources of fire and ignition, such as smoldering cigarettes, matches or candles.

If you require further information please contact the Mothercare Helpline on 0844 875 5122. - lines open from Monday to Saturday open from Monday to Saturday 8am - 8pm, Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday 9am - 5pm or email customersupport@mothercare.com

This action is a precautionary measure to ensure the safety and well-being of our customers and we apologise for any inconvenience this may cause.

Mothercare UK Ltd, Cherry Tree Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD24 6SH.

For further information on these and any other safety recalls please visit Croydon Trading Standards website at

<http://www.croydon.gov.uk/advice/tstandards/tsbr/oadcastbusinessadvice/safteynotices>

Was this bulletin helpful?

Please let us know what you think of this, and what Trading Standards topics you would like us to cover in the future

Contact Trading Standards

Tel No: **020 8407 1311** or
Email: trading.standards@croydon.gov.uk

Consumer Direct

Tel: **08454 04 05 06**
Email: www.consumerdirect.gov.uk