

Information Network Bulletin



September 2009



Welcome to another edition of the Information Bulletin
Brought to you by Croydon Trading Standards

Good News!

Dodgy TV sellers convicted

Having received numerous reports of flat screen televisions being sold from the back of a van to unsuspecting members of the public in local car parks, the Trading standards team have hit back with the prosecutions of traders in three separate incidents.

Mr Hughie McGinley was recently convicted at Croydon Crown Court, having been stopped by Police at in the car park Valley Park Retail Estate in October 2008 and found in possession of a number of unsafe and falsely labelled televisions, following a report from a member of the public who had been offered a TV for sale. He was sentenced to 120 hours of community service.

In the second incident, Mr James Ross has recently pleaded guilty to nine charges, including Fraud and breaches of electrical safety legislation, at Croydon Magistrates Court. He was arrested having offered a flat screen TV to an off-duty police officer in the car park of McDonalds on London Road, Norbury in January of this year. He was convicted of 9 offences, sentenced to 12 supervision order including requirement to attend 'Think First' programme which aims to reduce the chance of re-offending and had to pay £250 costs.

Nearly all of the TV's that are sold in this manner do not work and many present an electrical safety hazard. Croydon Trading Standards hopes that these recent successes will dissuade these TV sellers from trading in the Borough.

At the third attempt, in May 2009, members of the public, who happened to be off-duty Serious Organised Crime Agency officers, were approached and offered "brand new flat screen televisions" in the car park at the Tesco Extra store in Purley. They reported the matter to Police, who sent plain clothes officers to the scene. The fraudsters then offered to sell the so called "brand new televisions" to the plain clothes Police officers, and they were arrested.

In the van were found empty television and DVD player boxes, and four broken and scrapped flat screen televisions wrapped in black plastic and bubble wrap and made to look as new, complete with remote controls made of wrapped cardboard and false "Sale" leaflets from genuine well known high street retailers.

Trading Standards were alerted and took over the case. Anthony, Brian and Bernard McDonagh were convicted on 14 August 2009 at Croydon Magistrates Court. The court commented that this was a premeditated fraud, with a potential for severe harm to the community. Between them the three McDonagh brothers were sentenced to a total of 340 hours of unpaid work in the community and ordered to pay costs totalling £1300.

Trading Standards urge you to remember - not all those who come to Croydon do so with good intentions. Even if it looks a bargain – its probably not.

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Beware cold callers

In August 2009 TS were contacted by a resident who was concerned about a doorstep call he had received.

In June 2009 the consumer's road was resurfaced as part of the Councils on-going repair and improvement program.

One Tuesday evening in August the consumer got a knock on his door. The man on his doorstep was wearing a high-visibility vest with no company name/logo and he didn't offer any identification.

He said that he worked for the company that did the resurfacing work recently and that they had found a problem where water from the clay under his front garden paving was causing problems with the road and that he needed to get some of the clay dug-out and reduce the level of his front garden.

The man said that while the subcontractors were not able to take on private work, he had someone he could recommend to give him a quote. He said that they follow all the proper procedures, "7 day cooling off period after the quote and everything". Luckily the consumer was vigilant enough to send the man away and make his own further checks with the council to verify that this was a scam and that no clay needed to be dug from his front garden as a result of recent resurfacing works.

Do not take anything at face value from an anonymous doorstep caller. If you are concerned contact the Council or your local Safer neighbourhood Team.

EMAIL NEWS

This scam is becoming more common: A money laundering scam email from a Wright Matthew who wishes to invest in a partnership with you to your advantage.

A '419' scam email claiming to be from Western Union money transfer in the Benn Republic. Who has £500 thousand dollars waiting for you if you send them \$99 to register your payment. The email is from an 'Ututama' will no doubt be very pleased to receive your money!

Needles to Say – send nothing and do nothing other press 'delete'.



Scamnesty project

Instead of throwing away letters that promise, foreign lottery wins, free money from Nigerian banks and so-called get rich quick schemes, Croydon residents are being urged to give them to the council instead.

The Trading Standards service is launching Scamnesty Week in September to investigate the types of scams which are most often targeted against local residents. We would urge Croydon residents who receive scam mailings to drop them in our 'Scamnesty' bins in September. They could provide us with crucial intelligence to help put a stop to these scams in the future.

Scamnesty Week takes place in Croydon from Monday 14 to Friday 18 September (in conjunction with National Consumer Week) and will see special bins at various locations across the borough, where members of the public can drop any mail or email scams they've received.

The 'Scamnesty' bins can be found at local libraries, the Citizens Advice Bureaux in Thornton Heath and New Addington, Age Concern, in London Road, New Addington Pop In, in Salcott Crescent, and Access Croydon, at Taberner House, Park Lane.

Did you know.....

.....that Trading Standards offers a Consumer Advice Outreach surgery?

The remit of the service is to provide free, expert, impartial advice to Croydon residents so that they can resolve certain consumer problems they may be having with local shops or businesses.

In doing so, we can empower our residents with knowledge about their rights as consumers. Presently we hold such surgeries across the borough and the feedback on our service is very positive

So, if you are aware of any group that may benefit for these then please contact us.



National Consumer Week

This Trading Standards annual event will take place from 14 Sept to 18 Sept 2009 inclusive and the theme this year is “**Know our Rights**” which has been chosen to promote information about consumer rights, particularly to disadvantaged and low socio-economic groups.

The Trading Standards will host various roadshows which will consist of a manned display (except on 16 Sept at the Central library) and staff would be on hand to offer advice and give out useful information to the public.

The National Consumer Week roadshows will be at the following locations:-

- 14 September The Parchmore Centre
55 Parchmore Road
Thornton Heath
CR7 8LY
- 15 September New Addington Community Centre
Central Parade
New Addington
Croydon
CR00JB
- 16 September Central Library
Katharine Street
Croydon
CR9 1ET
- 17 September New Addington Pop-In
Salcot Crescent
New Addington
CR0 0JG
- 18 September Upper Norwood Assoc for Community Care

The Waterside Centre
26 Avenue Road
London
SE25 4DX

Also during this wee are urging residents to deposit their scam mailings into boxes which will be placed at specially designated venue.

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Bogus charity collections

Many people find donating old clothes and goods to charities a good method of clearing out their cupboards and making space. Charities often make use of doorstep collections to gather donations directly from people’s homes. However, some of these charity collections are bogus.

It is estimated by the Association of Charity Shops that the potential value of donated clothing and other items ‘lost’ to legitimate charities as a result of these bogus collections amounts to over £1m per annum. Many genuine charities rely on such doorstep collections for a substantial proportion of their shop sales.

Typically, householders receive flyers through their letterboxes appealing for donations of unwanted clothes, footwear and sometimes other household and electrical items, to be distributed to poor individuals and families in Eastern European or third world countries. Householders are asked to leave the goods in a plastic bag by the front door. These are later collected anonymously.

The flyers give the misleading impression that the items are being collected for charitable purposes. In reality, the collections seem to be organised by commercial operators who sell the donated items for profit. The misleading impression is in some instances reinforced by a reference to a registration number, which people may think is that of a Registered Charity but is in fact a limited company number.

If you have any doubts about a leaflet asking for donations, you can:

- Contact the Charity Commission helpline on 0845 300 0218 to check whether the collection is for, or on behalf of, a registered charity.
- Consumers in Scotland should contact the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) on 01382 220446 or check the [OSCR website](#) for further information.
- Contact your local authority to see if the collector has been licensed.



Give direct to a local charity shop instead or donate to a charity shop collection sack. These should make clear reference to the charity registration number and many will also carry the Association of Charity Shops Kitemark.

If you think you have been a victim of this scam call Consumer Direct for advice on 08454 040506

No Cold Calling Zone (NCCZ)

Croydon's third No Cold Calling Zone (NCCZ) has been set up in South Norwood after backing from local residents.

The Elm Park Residents' Association (TEPRA) worked with the council's trading standards service to canvass the views of the 235 households covered by the zone.

Its aim is to hand power to residents, particularly the elderly, by giving them help and confidence to say no to bogus callers and rogue traders. It has the full support of local police teams and the council's trading standards service.

Signs in local roads warn rogue traders that they are visiting an area, off South Norwood Hill, where they are not welcome, and where householders will not buy at the door.

The zone covers Oliver Avenue, Dixon, Nugent and Elm Park roads, as well as part of Whitehorse Lane, and is an area where police and trading standards statistics show elderly people have been targeted by rogue traders.

Residents' packs full of handy information and 'no cold calling stickers' to display in windows have been delivered to local households.

Resident associations who want to set up their own NCCZ can contact the council's trading standards service for an information CD by emailing Trading.standards@croydon.gov.uk or calling 020 8407 1311.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH ASSOCIATION

The CBNWA submitted an application for additional funding to run a Distraction Burglary Protect to improve crime reduction in the Croydon area. Details can be found on the Community Cashback web site on the following link:

<http://cashback.cjonline.go.uk/cc.asp?area=23mode=vote>

Please visit the site and click on the Distraction Burglary Prevention protect for further details. After reading the information please click in the box again and a tick will appear, this registers your vote for this protect. If we can obtain this funding it will be used to help some of the most vulnerable people in the borough.

Operation Safe For All

As part of Operation Safe For All, the Police and Croydon Council's drive to reduce knife crime in the borough, between April 2008 and March 2009 Trading Standards carried out 78 test purchases across Croydon where 20 stores sold knives to young volunteers under the age of 18. 17 successful prosecutions have ensued with the remaining three still proceeding through the courts. Other test purchase operations have included alcohol, tobacco and fireworks.

If you suspect a Croydon based retailer of selling age restricted products to people under the age of 18 then you are urged to report your concerns to Trading Standards, via Consumer Direct who can be contacted on 08454 04 05 06

Trading Standards Services Contact Details

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