

An Garda Síochána

Crime Prevention Information Sheet



Personal Safety

Bogus Traders/Callers



Bogus Traders / Callers

Many people routinely employ door-to-door traders and repair people / contractors. Some of these people carry out very little work and charge exorbitant amounts of money for their services. In some cases this could be criminal behaviour and there are common ways that these crimes are perpetrated.

There are recognised and defined criminal offences for this type of behaviour and they range from criminal damage, deception, to demanding money with menaces. All are dealt with under existing criminal legislation and offenders, when caught, can be successfully prosecuted before the criminal courts. There are broadly four ways that this form of crime can be committed:

1. Poor Work/Excessive Charges – or indeed no work performed at all.

The culprits, in this instance, usually call to the home of a victim identified by them beforehand. This is often the home of an older or frail person living alone. This information is usually gleaned by surveillance or 'discreet' / 'innocent' enquiries made by the culprits locally. They may also target the person because they have been 'successful' there previously. They will often call on the pretext of being professional roofers, guttering experts, painters or other trades people etc. and 'convince' the victim that repairs need to be carried out.



They will offer their services on the understanding that they are competent and in-expensive. They will then usually go to the roof or attic of the house identified and start hammering, drilling, painting etc. to give the appearance of working. On completing the 'work', invariably in a short period, they then demand payment by cash, often using threatening and intimidating tactics. They may even drive the victim to the bank to collect money.

2. Bogus V.A.T. Charges

Different members of the same gang may return at a future date to a victim's house posing as V.A.T. or Revenue Officials. They will demand money for 'work' already performed by them and seek further payments.

3. Deposit Scams

When the criminals are satisfied that they have hoodwinked the intended victim into engaging them for work; they will demand a deposit to purchase the materials to carry out the necessary repairs. Having secured the deposit they flee, never to return.

4. Opportunity Thefts

The thieves will target a particular area and offer a real or genuine service to the victim. Once having gained entry to the home they may decide to see what is of value to purchase or buy well below the market value. This could be furniture, paintings or other valuables. They then coerce their victim to sign receipts for the sale of the article secured by them. They can use subtle and intimidating tactics into forcing the victim to 'sell' to them what they want.

What can people do to prevent the aforementioned criminal behaviour?

If a person calls to your door offering you professional trade services observe the following:

- Tell the caller that you never employ trades people 'cold calling' to your door. Ask for a sales brochure or other documentation that you can

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS OR OTHER CRIME PREVENTION ISSUES,
PLEASE CONTACT
your local GARDÁ CRIME PREVENTION OFFICER
or
visit the Garda website at www.garda.ie

subsequently investigate and verify as credible. This should have a contact telephone number, known address and a V.A.T. registered number.

- Be particularly careful where sales documentation only displays mobile contact numbers or incomplete addresses. Telephone directory enquiries can assist in establishing the credibility and bona fides of the company or individual concerned.
- If you are satisfied that the company or individual is credible and you still think their employment is necessary, ask for an itemised written quotation for the services being offered and the names of persons and locations where they have previously worked successfully.
- Never solely rely on the accuracy of the information being proffered. Verify the information yourself.
- Always seek comparable estimates for any services offered from other established reputable companies.
- Never engage a person who insists on cash payment for services offered. Even when employing a reputable company always use a method of payment that is traceable.
- Never leave strangers, even bona fide workers, unsupervised in your home.



If you think you have become a victim to this type of crime what should you do?

Never be embarrassed or ashamed to contact the Gardaí. **Do so immediately.**

Write down all you can remember about what happened to include descriptions of the persons, their clothing, any peculiarities or distinguishing features and any vehicles used by them. Keep safely any documents they may have given you.

For those people who may have elderly or vulnerable neighbours or friends, be a good neighbour and advise them of these possible scams. If you suspect that bogus callers or trades people are in your area and appear suspicious or are working in a vulnerable neighbour's home – never hesitate in contacting the Gardaí immediately.

Genuine trades people will not be offended by any enquiries the Gardaí may make and, indeed, usually welcome them.

Ask your local Garda station about 'bogus caller cards'. For people who feel particularly vulnerable these cards advise that the front door should not be open to cold callers. Apply the chain or door limiter and hand the caller the card, see below. Do not enter into a conversation with the caller. As stated above genuine callers will leave their details on the card.



Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it usually is!

Alarm and CCTV installers require a licence from the Private Security Authority to carry out work on your home. A list of licensed operators can be found on www.psa.gov.ie.

The advice contained in this information sheet is not intended to be exhaustive or absolute.

Nothing contained in this publication should be interpreted as mandatory, obligatory or designed to conflict with any statutory regulations.

Useful Contacts and Links

**The Garda National Crime Prevention Unit,
Garda H.Q., Harcourt Square, Dublin 2.
Tel: (01) 6663362, Fax: (01) 6663314
Email: NCPU@garda.ie**

An Garda Síochána
www.garda.ie

**The Private Security Authority,
Davis Street,
Tipperary Town
Co. Tipperary
info@psa.gov.ie**