

BEWARE ROGUE TRADERS

IF IN DOUBT KEEP THEM OUT!

This time of year can see a rise in the numbers of doorstep crimes reported which can include distraction burglaries, bogus officials, high pressure doorstep selling, rogue traders and cold callers, the message is 'If in Doubt, Keep them Out'. Report any suspicious individuals to the police either using the non-emergency 101 service (no immediate danger) or in an emergency dial 999, (suspicious individuals at your address or a neighbours)

Bogus traders may try and point out 'problems' that don't actually exist. Such traders can be extremely persuasive and elderly and vulnerable people are often targeted. Low prices are quoted, but as the work starts the price tends to increase.

In most cases the work is done to a very poor standard, leaving the owner facing a second bill to have the work redone properly. They use a variety of sales pitches to get you to agree to having work done. These include suggesting that the property, if not repaired, will be dangerous and may cause additional problems to the structure of your home or putting a time restriction on the offer to hurry you into making a decision.

The work will normally be done immediately, before the householder changes their mind, and very often any information provided by the workmen (names, addresses, telephone numbers) are false, making them very hard to trace.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM BOGUS TRADERS:

- don't be forced into making a quick decision on the doorstep
- get at least three quotes from local reputable companies who have reputations to maintain, and if possible seek recommendations
- only deal with firms with genuine verifiable telephone numbers and addresses - beware of companies that only use mobile phone numbers and accommodation addresses
- anyone who signs a contract on the door step following a visit that was not arranged (unsolicited) does have 7 days in which to cancel it by law.
- all cancellation rights must be provided in writing to the customer at the time the contract is agreed, usually on the doorstep - it is an offence not to do so
- if you don't want to speak to the trader don't open your door to them - it can be hard to distinguish the good traders from the cowboys so it might be easier to keep the door closed
- do not allow uninvited callers into your home
- refuse to be taken to the bank to withdraw money - if you ever feel intimidated by them, close the door and call the police