

Recent Scams -Trading Standards Warning

3 September 2010

Consumers are warned to beware of scam merchants making phone calls to unsuspecting Lancashire residents. Please warn your friends and neighbours of the following:

1. Calls purporting to be from the Office of Fair Trading claiming that the consumer is due to receive a refund for overpaid bank charges, of around £800 to £3,000. The money will be received once a deposit of £195 is paid at the nearest post office, probably by money transfer (we do not have a complainant who has paid so far). The consumer will be given a receipt and later that day an official from the OFT will deliver a cheque to their door.
2. Calls purporting to be from Microsoft, claiming there are viruses on the computer and they need to sort this out. Consumers are asked to log on to various websites where they will be talked through certain steps, involving running a programme which may allow the caller to take control of the computer. On some occasions consumers are asked for bank details, on other occasions they take steps which allow another to obtain access to their computer, which may include access to personal details.
3. Bogus calls to students from 'Student Finance' informing them there has been a hitch with their student loans, and they will have to give their bank details again by clicking on a computer link if they wish to receive the money.
4. Cold calls falsely claiming to be from utilities companies, asking if there is anyone over 70 in the house, offering various energy-saving products and charging £100 for them.
5. Resurrection of the scam where a cold caller falsely claims to be from a borough council and attempts to get bank details out of a consumer in order to repay them previously overpaid council tax charges.
6. A scam where consumers who have previously lost out on shares frauds with American links are informed the US government has a scheme where they recover the defrauded amounts, and then pay 85% of the lost share value. The consumer needs to pay for this service, and on one occasion the amount quoted was £25,000. The trader claims to be linked to a British bank and gives a name listed with the Financial Services Authority.

Refer any complaints to Lancashire Trading Standards Service, 55 Guildhall Street, Preston, Lancs PR1 3NU via Consumer Direct tel 08454 040506.