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**SCAM
WISE**

**Advice from Trading
Standards about
Doorstep Traders**

They're just
out to get your
money.

**Don't fall
for it!**

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Southwest

A campaign by
Trading Standards in
South West England
to help stop people
being conned by
rogue traders.



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Don't deal with doorstep traders

Some doorstep sellers are honest, but unfortunately there are some rogue traders who target their victims by making uninvited 'cold calls' and offering to provide goods or services.

The rogues target people who are less able to check the quality of the work or who may be easily intimidated into parting with large sums of money.

These goods or services are poor quality, but when consumers try to complain they find it difficult or impossible to contact the trader who often refuses to return or has disappeared.

The most common 'scams' to be wary of include:

Driveway gangs & others going door-to-door offering building and repair work

Someone knocks on your door claiming to be working in the area, saying they can surface your drive at a cut-price rate. Or they may say your roof needs repairing.

They can be quite charming in their attempts to get you to agree to the work, but they may be threatening when the time comes to pay. Some go as far as driving elderly people to the bank so they can withdraw more cash. A few months later, when there are weeds coming through the drive or the roof is leaking, the traders have vanished and there is little hope of finding them. Typically they target those less able to check the quality of the work done, people they think could be intimidated and who they believe won't complain.

Do not buy from doorstep traders however convincing they seem. Contact the Police or Consumer Direct if they are targetting people in your area.

Consumer Direct 08454 04 05 06

Avoid the rogues. Trading Standards say **don't deal with doorstep traders.**

Ask friends or relatives to recommend reputable local traders.

Telephone relevant trade associations to ask for members in your area.

Check if there is an approved trader scheme with Consumer Direct.



Digital television aerials

Someone knocks on your door offering to up-grade or replace your TV aerial so that you will be able to receive digital television, which is being phased in by the government from 2008. They will go up on your roof, or wherever the aerial is fitted, and pretend to carry out some work or replace the aerial before they present you with a bill.

Please Note

Most households will not need a new aerial, but you will need to buy a 'set top' box and plug it into your television or buy a new television with a digital box already inside (often called an Integrated Digital TV or iDTV).

For more information go to:

**www.digitaluk.co.uk
or call 08456 50 50 50**

Roofing, home repairs & garden maintenance

Sometimes workmen cold call and offer to do home repairs like roofing, guttering, fascia work or garden maintenance. In some cases the work does not need doing at all. If the work is necessary, it may be done to a very poor standard and the final bill will be far higher than their initial verbal quote.

These workmen may become threatening when they demand payment and will leave an invoice with very little contact information. If there are problems with the work, it will then be very difficult to contact them to get them to come back and resolve any problems.

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Say

**"No, thank
you"**

**...and close
the door**





Protect yourself

Take control of the situation

It is difficult to spot a rogue so Trading Standards advise

- DON'T buy from doorstep traders.
- Display a sticker on your door saying **No Doorstep Traders**. Free stickers may be available from Trading Standards or Neighbourhood Watch.

You are strongly advised not to deal with doorstep traders.

DO

- Check identification of callers and ask to see their ID card. Check by independently verifying the number in the phonebook and then phoning the company.
- If you have any doubts about the person on your doorstep say 'No thank you' and close the door. If they refuse to go away tell them that you will call the police and dial 999.

If you have any evidence that workmen are using 'scams' in your area, we would like to hear from you. Don't confront them. Just get as much information as you can, such as vehicle description and registration number, and contact either your local Trading Standards Service or the police straight away.



If you need to get work done at home...

DON'T

- Don't make a "snap" decision. Never be persuaded by the argument that this is "the only opportunity because this offer ends tomorrow" or "we are only in the area this week".
- Don't sign a contract until you are completely happy with it.
- Don't pay a deposit unless you have to and only pay a very small amount.
- Don't pay for the work or materials in advance. Most reputable builders have trade accounts and do not need payment in advance.
- Don't pay cash. Pay with a cheque (which can be traced if necessary) or if the service or goods cost more than £100 then use a credit card as this offers extra protection.
- Don't pay the final bill unless you are fully satisfied. If necessary sign the invoice "not examined" if you have not been able to examine the work.
- Don't let the trader escort you to the bank to take out money to pay them. If they are threatening or insistent then call the police on 999.

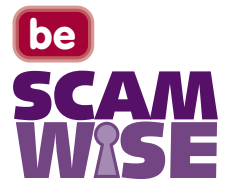
Stay safe

Stay Out Stranger

Always check who's at the door

IF you're not sure, **DON'T OPEN THE DOOR**

Expecting a caller? Door chain on & check I.D.



Phone Consumer Direct for help and advice on 08454 04 05 06

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What you should do

Take control of the situation

- Try to use a local trader or someone that has been recommended to you for any work on your home.
- Find out the name and address of the business owners - a mobile or 0800 number is not acceptable, nor is a PO box or suite number.
- Ask for a detailed written quotation – not an estimate. A quotation is legally binding, but an estimate simply gives a rough idea of how much something will cost.

It's OK to say "I'm going to shop around" or "I need time to think" or "I need to consult someone else" before you make a decision.

- Get a second opinion and at least 2 other written quotations as a price comparison.
- Check any claims made by the seller or trader and read any small print on any paperwork. Always check these details before agreeing anything or paying any money.
- If they claim membership of a trader association then call and verify their membership.
- If they are VAT registered you may also want to call HM Revenue & Customs and verify that the number they are using is correct.
- Check to see that the trader has insurance.
- Get an invoice or receipt for any work done or goods provided and make sure it has the company name, address and a telephone number (not a mobile or 0800 number). Make sure the trader writes the invoice, not you. If the trader is a partnership or sole trader not trading in their own name, then the name of the proprietor(s) should also be on the paperwork.
- Remember that any reputable business will always be happy to allow you to carry out these checks.

It's your home and your money.

Callers and traders should do things on **your** terms.

If you need help to deal with callers ask a neighbour.

Phone Consumer Direct for help and advice on 08454 04 05 06

Your right to cancel contracts made at home

If you make a contract at your home, someone else's home, your place of work or on an excursion organised by a trader **AND** the price is over £35...

- The trader must give you a **written notice of your rights**, including a cancellation form, which explains how you can cancel.
- If the trader fails to give you this written notice, **he does not have a legal right to demand payment** and the trader commits a **criminal offence. Call Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06 immediately if this happens to you.**
- You have a **7 day cooling off period** in which you can change your mind and cancel. You must do this in writing.
- The cancellation comes into effect on the day you send the letter - **not** on the day it is received. **Keep a copy and get proof of posting.**
- If you agree to work starting before the end of the 7 day cooling off period you are asked to put this in writing. You will still have a right to cancel but if you decide to do so, you will have to pay reasonable costs for work the trader has already done.
- If you make a credit or hire agreement at home you still have a cooling off period but the rules are different. Your right to cancel must be set out in the agreement.

Remember your other consumer rights

- Goods must be of satisfactory quality and as described.
- Services must be carried out with reasonable skill and care and within a reasonable time.
- If not agreed in advance, charges must be reasonable.

NEVER agree to work being done by a cold caller, however tempting or convenient it sounds.

Written contracts and signed agreements for extra work will reduce the risk of disputes over the price and what has been agreed.

Trading Standards advise NOT to deal with doorstep traders. However if you decide to go ahead you may have a right to cancel.

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about
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traders

Never forget

It is your doorstep and you always have the right to say 'I do not buy from doorstep traders'.

It is sometimes difficult to say 'No'. Doorstep traders are often trained in high pressure sales techniques and can be very persuasive.

If you ask a cold caller to leave and they refuse, it is a criminal offence. **Call the police.**

Finally - do not assume that all advertisements in Yellow Pages, other business directories or local papers are from bona fide traders. It is rare for publishers to check the credentials of people who advertise with them. Similarly an address and freephone (0800) number do not necessarily signify a reputable business.

Make sure you use recommended businesses and traders. The best ways to find them are to

1. Ask friends and relatives to recommend people
2. Telephone relevant trade associations and ask them for members in your area
3. Check if there is an approved trader scheme with Consumer Direct.

**To contact Trading Standards and Consumer Direct telephone
08454 04 05 06
or log onto www.consumerdirect.gov.uk**



funded by government

Consumer Direct is delivered in partnership with the Office of Fair Trading and local authority Trading Standards across the South West of England.

