

get

**SCAM
WISE**

They're just
out to get your
money.

**Don't fall
for it!**

**Advice from Trading
Standards about
Mailing Scams**



**SCAM
WISE**
Southwest

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

Don't be ripped off by mailing scams

All of us have received junk mail through our letterboxes at some time. Most of us find it a nuisance but from time to time more sinister scam mail can arrive - here are some examples.

Prize letters

Stop junk mail and calls by registering for the mailing and telephone preference services (see back cover)

You receive a letter stating you have won or are guaranteed a prize. You are asked to send a small fee or make an expensive phone call to claim the prize. The letter often uses deceptive wording to imply, without ever specifically stating, that you have won the prize.

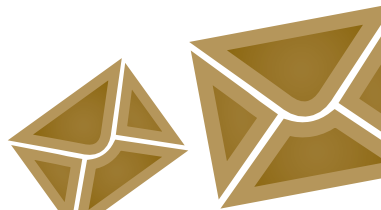
None of these letters ever pay out any cash prizes. If you do send money, your name may be sold on to other fraudsters and you will find yourself bombarded with letters of a similar nature. These are invariably sent from outside the UK and Europe, and are very difficult to stop.

Miracle Cures

You receive unsolicited mail or e-mails claiming to be able to cure an incurable disease or ailment. Always consult a health care professional before parting with any money for treatments.

Trading Standards advise you to put all junk mail straight into the recycle bin.

If it sounds too good to be true it probably is!



Don't send money to "claim" money

Overseas and other lottery scams

Don't respond to requests for you to send money to claim 'winnings' from overseas lottery programmes.

The scam starts when people respond to mail, e-mails or phone calls (often sent from Canada, Australia or Spain) telling them they are being entered in a national lottery or some other prize draw. They soon receive a phone call congratulating them on winning the 'big prize'.

These scams usually ask for personal details - full name, date of birth, next of kin, bank account - and once you have given these they will ask for a substantial amount to "claim" your prize, to "register" and to pay "taxes". **DON'T REPLY!**

Often these calls are repeated and people send more money. UK consumers have lost thousands of pounds. The prize doesn't exist and they never receive any winnings in return for their cash.

If you have lost money and become a victim of an overseas scam, the Office of Fair Trading would like to hear from you.

Contact them by calling: **08457 224 499**

Or report it to **Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06.**

be
SCAM
WISE
Trading
Standards
say

**"Throw these
letters in the
recycle bin"**

**...and save
yourself £££s**

Put junk mail straight in the recycle bin

Chain Letters

You receive a letter at your home address telling you of a miraculous way to earn vast sums of money. Usually your instructions are to send £10 to a particular name and address and then to send copies of the letter you received to names and addresses you are asked to gather from the phone book. Chain letters like these have been around in this country for years without any real evidence of anyone making huge profits. These letters are usually very difficult to trace back to an original sender because they pass through dozens of hands.

Put all junk mail in the recycle bin.

Foreign Money Laundering

These come as e-mails, faxes or letters, usually from China or African countries, with requests for your bank details so that the writer can 'transfer' money into this country through your account. In return you are offered a percentage of the millions which will be passing your way. The money is often linked to a change in government, a coup or the death of a long-lost relative.

You risk losing all the money in your bank account if you take up such 'offers'. They are international fraud and are investigated by the police.

A website has been set up where details of these can be logged – you can find it at **www.nafn.gov.uk**

Trading Standards say **never** give your financial or personal details to someone you don't know.

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

Advice from Trading Standards

Ignore letters that ask you to send money or give bank/credit card details or any other personal details. Throw them away.

Never ring a premium rate - 09 - phone number. They make money from the cost of the call.

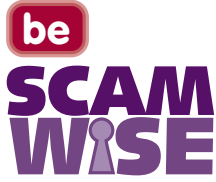
Never reply to junk mail. You can find your name added to more mailing lists even if you have not sent any money.

Much of this mail is sent from abroad and it is difficult, if not impossible, for the authorities in the UK to control it. Often the address used is an accommodation address. Look out for these addresses which include PO box or suite numbers. If you respond any money you send is likely to be forwarded abroad. Mailing lists are sold from one rogue firm to another.

Most people who send money get nothing. If they do receive something it is usually cheap and shoddy and certainly not worth the money they paid. If you send money to a firm that is based abroad, you are unlikely to get your money back if things go wrong.

Government departments and Trading Standards do their best to publicise the risks of responding to this type of mail through leaflets, talks and press, TV and radio features.

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



Predictions for the Future

A 'psychic' writes to you, giving vague predictions for the future and threatening that you will suffer harm or bad luck unless you send money.

Ignore it. The people behind these despicable mailings just want to frighten you into sending them money. They CAN'T control what will happen in your life.

Someone with your surname has died abroad leaving a large estate

You receive an unsolicited e-mail from abroad. This claims that someone with the same surname as you has died and that as they have no other living relatives you are entitled to their large estate simply because you have the same surname. If you do get in touch to try and claim this money you will be strung along for cash and bank account details in much the same way as if you had responded to the foreign money laundering scam mentioned above.

Money making schemes

You are sent a letter stating that the sender has discovered a marvellous way of making lots of money, a scheme they will tell you about for a small fee. You send the money and you get a letter telling you to send out adverts of the type you initially received or something equally worthless.

If you lose money to these sorts of scams report it to Consumer Direct

Ignore them. There is no real work.

Most of these scams are criminal offences. They come from abroad and are difficult for UK agencies to control. The only way to stop them is by not responding. If you do it is impossible to get your money back.

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

Undelivered packages

You are left a note in the post stating that a courier has failed to deliver a package from overseas or containing perishable goods. You read the small print and find that you have to ring an 09 premium rate number to retrieve the package. This call may last for 7 to 13 minutes, at a charge rate of £1.50 per minute, your parcel is costing you £10 to £20, but is likely to be of little value, e.g. some vouchers or a cheap gift.

To check on any premium rate numbers or to complain about traders using premium rate numbers contact Phonepayplus:

Phonepayplus on 0800 500 212.

For mobiles this is a free call number.

Text the number you want to check to 76787.

www.phonepayplus.org.uk

Shopping and Consumer Surveys

You may receive these in the post. They often ask for very personal information - date of birth, next of kin - and invite you to receive information about goods and services.

In the wrong hands, such information can be used later on to deceive you into thinking you are being contacted by a “trusted” source.

Trading Standards advise you to be very cautious when responding to such surveys.

Remember

Throw it away if the letter contains:

- A request for money.
- Addresses that are PO box and suite numbers or based abroad.
- A request for your bank account details. Report it to your bank first.
- Instructions to call a telephone number beginning 09.

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

stay
SCAM
WISE
about
mailing
scams

If you receive any letters like those we have described, simply tear them up and throw them in the recycle bin.

Reduce junk mail and phone calls through the following services, which are absolutely free!

Mailing Preference Service 08457 034 599

or see their website: www.mpsonline.org.uk

Telephone Preference Service 08450 700 707

or see their website: www.tpsonline.org.uk

E-mail Preference Service

Website: www.e-mps.org

Once you are on their list, unsolicited phone calls and mail shots will be reduced.

You can help reduce the amount of junk mail which lands on your doormat by registering with the mailing preference service (MPS).

You can do this by calling them on

08457 034 599

or filling in the on-line registration form at

www.mpsonline.org.uk/mpsr/

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.

