

**get**

**SCAM  
WISE**

**Advice from Trading  
Standards about  
Doorstep Traders**

They're just  
out to get your  
money.

**Don't fall  
for it!**

**SCAM  
WISE**  
**Southwest**

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



## 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 those 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:

### Tarmac gangs

Someone knocks on your door claiming to be working in the area and that they have some tarmac with which to surface your drive at a cut price rate. They often state that they have been doing work for the council and have the tarmac left over.

Work done is usually of very poor quality and the final bills are often far higher than what was originally quoted. Although they can be quite charming in their attempts to get you to agree to the work, they often turn threatening when it comes to the time to pay. Many go as far as to drive older people to the bank in order that they may withdraw more money. A few months later, when there are weeds coming through the tarmac, the traders have vanished with little hope of finding them.

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 upgrade or replace your TV aerial to receive digital television, which is being phased in 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.

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.digitaltelevision.gov.uk](http://www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk)**

**[www.digitaluk.co.uk](http://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. Often the work they do is unnecessary and in some cases did not need doing at all. Even if the work was required, 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.

**be**  
**SCAM**  
**WISE**

**say**

**"No, thank  
you"**

**...and close  
the door**





## Take control of the situation

It is difficult to spot a rogue so Trading Standards advise

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

## DO

- Only open the door if you have the chain on.
- Check identification of callers and ask to see their ID card and check it 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 are alone ask the caller to come back and arrange for someone else to be present.

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 and contact either your local Trading Standards Service or the Police straight away.

**You are strongly advised not to deal with doorstep traders.**

**Report the rogues, phone Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06**

## DON'T

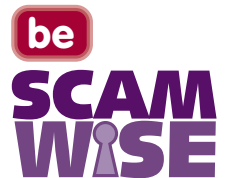
- Don't make a 'snap' decision. Never be persuaded by the argument that this is 'the only opportunity because this offer ends tomorrow' or 'we are only in the area this week'.
- Don't sign a contract until you are completely happy with it.
- Don't pay a deposit unless you have to and only pay a very 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.

**LOCK** all doors.

**STOP**, think, is anyone expected?

**CHAIN** on before opening the door.

Ask for I.D. and **CHECK** it.



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

get

**SCAM  
WISE**

## What you should do

### Take control of the situation

- 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.

## What the law says about doorstep trading

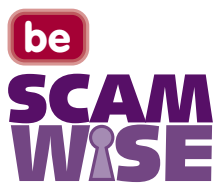
For goods or services over £35 which you purchased as the result of an **uninvited** visit, or a visit arranged as a result of an uninvited visit or an uninvited telephone call, you have certain cancellation rights.

- You must be given a **written form setting out your rights to cancel the agreement**.
  - You are entitled to **7 days to cancel the agreement\*** starting the day after the visit. If work starts within the 7 day period you can still cancel, but call Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06 for assistance. **You must cancel in writing**.
  - A trader commits a criminal offence if they fail to provide you with a written cancellation notice. Call 08454 04 05 06 immediately if this happens to you.
- \* This does not apply if you invite the trader to call. However most credit and hire agreements have different rules and whether the trader was invited or not, you still have 5 days to cancel credit or hire agreements signed at home, which begins after you have received the second copy of the agreement.

**If you want to cancel the agreement you must do so in writing.** Keep a copy and get proof of posting. The cancellation comes into effect on the day you send the letter - **not** on the day it is received.

Remember - you also have other consumer rights.

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



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

**stay**  
**SCAM**  
**WISE**  
**about**  
**doorstep**  
**traders**

**Never forget - it is your doorstep. 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.

### **Some final words of advice**

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](http://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.

