

CURRENT SCAMS

1. Data Protection Scams - Phone Call & Mail

North Yorkshire Trading Standards have received complaints about a variation on the long running data protection registration scams. Traders are now being approached via telephone, by organisations purporting to represent the Date Protection Register. They insist that traders are operating illegally by not being registered and must pay £150 to register under the Act. The attraction of the telephone for such unscrupulous businesses is that it is harder to trace than a letter and it is easier to deny what was said if there is not recording made of the call. If you are approached in this manner do not agree to register or to pay the fee. Please contact North Yorkshire Consumer Advice on 01609 768 606, if you receive any telephone calls of this nature.

The regulatory body for the Data Protection Act is the Office of the Information Commissioner. They will be able to tell you whether or not you do need to register. Registration can be carried out over the telephone. The number is 01625 545745. The fee is £35 + VAT and this is payable annually.

Traders have also been approached by letter in the past. The nature of these communications is causing concern to the Information Commissioner and the Office of Fair Trading. You can complain directly to the OFT at the address below or you can contact North Yorkshire Trading Standards and they will collect complaints to forward to the OFT.

Michelle Vaughan, Misleading Advertising Unit CRE2/E, Office of Fair Trading, Fleetbank House, 2-6 Salisbury Square, London, EC4Y 8JX. Tel: 020 7211 8338, Fax: 020 7211 8429.

2. Scam Targeting Local Hotels

NYCC Trading Standards have received two complaints from hotels in North Yorkshire. In both cases, the hotels were asked to fax copies of their brochures on premium rate telephone lines. The request was sent to the hotels on a fax headed Paula Getti Holdings (Isle of Man) Limited. Trading Standards believe that the company is not looking to provide business to the hotels but is using the premium rate line to make money.

3. Credit Card Fraud

Harrogate Police have informed us of a number of incidents recently where credit cards cash and identification documents have been stolen from hotels in the Harrogate district. These have been used to obtain foreign currency from local Bureau de Changes. Please reinforce and encourage your guests to use safes within your premises.

4. Canadian Lottery Scams

UK consumers have in the past fallen victim to bogus Canadian lottery scams, and dubious e-mail approaches urging people to part with their money often originate from overseas.

Canadian lottery scams involve an unsolicited telephone call informing the recipient that they have won a large prize in a Canadian lottery. In order to receive the prize, the winner must pay taxes or a handling fee but no win is ever received.

Canadian telemarketing scams refer to the activities of unscrupulous telemarketers who ring unsuspecting consumers and small business to trick them into parting with their money. They operate by "pitching" for a non-existent or misrepresented product, service or charitable gift.

Another source of complaints is the telemarketing of entries in phoney business directories. Unsolicited calls to small businesses are followed by demands for payment for entries in these bogus publications.