



BUSINESS WATCH Security Alert No. 6 DIRECTORY ADVERTISING

1. ADVERTISING SALES SCAM

North Yorkshire Trading Standards have advised us that a North Yorkshire school has received an invoice for an entry in the 2003 "British Business Directory".

The sender was **Infotel Directories Inc**, c/o Pretoria Road, Chertsey. Although the original company is based in Montreal. The invoice was for £198.30 with interest of £5.61 added for late payment.

This appears to be yet another variant of previous attempts to elicit payment for Directory Entries by foreign companies. **You do not have to pay for directory entries that you have not ordered.**

2. DIRECTORY SCAM

The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) have advised us of a scam whereby their name is being used to lure businesses into signing up for an entry in a (probably non-existent) directory. A trader received a call from an unnamed caller claiming to represent the OFT. The caller said that the OFT were producing a directory of trustworthy and honest providers of credit and that the cost of an entry was £199. Needless to say, the OFT are not producing a directory like this.

The OFT keep details of all credit licence holders on a public register but does not recommend any one credit provider over another. Any traders who breach the licencing terms can have their licence revoked.

Trading Standards would appreciate a phone call if you are approached by any salesman selling a directory entry and claiming to be from, or acting for, the OFT.

3. ADVERTISING SCAM ALERT

Trading Standards have received three complaints about a company allegedly selling advertising on restaurant menus. The business claims that adverts will be printed onto the menus, which will then be delivered to other businesses and homes. In fact the restaurant named has not agreed to have this advertising appearing on their menus. The salesman in question is also using deceptive direct debit forms. Details are covered up, and in one case the form was amended after the customer had signed it, causing over £500 to be removed from an account without authority.

Trading Standards advise businesses approached by an advertising salesman to:

- Check with the company on whose menu the adverts will be placed
- Check every document before it is signed and keep copies
- Confirm exactly what it is that is being purchased, such as size of advert, frequency of publication and distribution, how many premises the advertising will reach, how the sales company will prove this and when the advertising will start. This should all be confirmed in writing to give sufficient grounds for action following any breach of contract.
- Check what was signed in relation to payments being taken from the account and when.

If you need further advice or if anyone receives anything similar to either of the above scams, please contact **North Yorkshire Trading Standards on:- Tel: 01609 768606 Fax: 01609 768649**

E-mail: trading.standards@northyorks.gov.uk

P.T.O.

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4. WARNING OVER NET SALES TACTICS

Trading Standards have been alerted to a net sales scam that appeared on the BBC New Website in February. Internet users are being warned to be on the lookout for letters that appear to be invoices for domain names that they have not purchased. The UK domain name registrar, Nominet, is asking people who own co.uk web addresses to let them know if they have received one of these letters.

The unsolicited mailings have been sent by a company called UK Internet Registry, which seems to be based in the Seychelles. The note says that the .com version of a co.uk name is unregistered, offering to sell it for a total of £175. The letters offer a .com address for £69 and a further £169 for web and e-mail forwarding.

In its statement, Nominet said it was "concerned about the confusion that had been created by the sales tactics of UK Internet Registry". Nominet has warned people not to be "bounced into registering a domain name by the pressure selling tactics of an unknown third party". Instead, the owners of web addresses should get in touch with their usual domain name provider".

Trading Standards have advised businesses to check any invoices for Internet services closely. Further information is available from Nominet at:

www.nominet.org.uk/News/NewsStories/StatementOnUkInternetRegistryLtd.html

5. HARROGATE COUNCIL MEMBER SERVICES DIRECTORY

Members may be approached by someone claiming to act on behalf of Harrogate Borough Council in the production of a directory for Council Members. I have checked on the validity of this project with HBC. They confirm that they have a contract with a Mr Fish to produce such a directory at no cost to Harrogate Borough Council. It has to be funded entirely on advertising and there is no guarantee whatsoever by Harrogate Borough Council that the directory will be published or that any payments for advertising will be refunded in the event of non-publication.

As usual - buyer beware!

6. HOAX E-MAILS

There are currently a number of e-mails going round which claim to be from support@microsoft.com. Microsoft do not send out e-mail from this address - in fact, there is no such account, so any e-mail from support@microsoft.com is either a virus or a hoax. Do not open any attached files from this source.

At the moment there is one specific virus which goes under a variety of names (including PALYH and Mankx) which seems to be causing problems around the County. Firewalls delete viruses from the attachment but allow the e-mail through - you will see the attachment has been changed to 'Interscan SafeStamp.txt', which will tell you the name of the offending virus. Any such e-mails can safely be deleted.