

TSI warning of distraction burglars using freezing weather to access homes

The Trading Standards Institute (TSI) is urging residents to beware of rogues offering to check the house for frozen pipes.

Trading standards services have received reports of vulnerable consumers being visited by criminals claiming to be from a water company. Once they've gained access into the home the householder is distracted in the kitchen or bathroom while the burglars make away with valuables.

The warning comes as water companies reveal they are taking a record number of calls – three to four times more than the winter average. Frozen pipes and leaks are the main complaints.

David Sanders, chairman of TSI, said: “The unscrupulous take their opportunities in adversity and we know conmen are taking advantage of widespread problems with plumbing that the freezing weather conditions have caused.

“We are urging consumers to be vigilant with any trader turning up on their doorstep uninvited – should they need repairs or checks carried out we'd advise them to call their water supplier and arrange for an engineer to visit by appointment.”

Consumers are also advised to check schemes such as Trustmark and Buy with Confidence to find a reputable trader for repairs. Other tips to avoid falling victim to rogues include:

- Use a trader recommended by friends or family
- Get three quotes
- Do not use a trader who just turns up on your doorstep or leaves a leaflet; they could be anyone.

Should anyone have doubts about the credentials of a trader knocking on their door they should take up as many details as they can, including the registration

number on the vehicle, and report them to their local trading standards service or the police.

Notes for Editors:

For further information or to arrange an interview please contact Irja Howie at TSI press office on 08456089430 or pressoffice@tsi.org.uk

Members of the Local Authority Assured Trader Scheme Network (LAATSN) run schemes across the UK that require businesses to comply with all Trading Standards legislation and civil law obligations, are prohibited from high pressure selling and have an effective complaints procedure. These schemes tend to attract smaller, 'local' contractors.

For more details visit <http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/advice/laatsn.cfm>

No Cold Calling Zones are an increasingly popular way to deter rogues from knocking your doorstep – their purpose is to give local residents or communities the confidence to say “NO” to uninvited salespeople and to warn rogue traders and cold-callers that they are being watched.

Hundreds of zones are now operating successfully across the UK with reports of significant crime reduction and a greater feeling of security amongst residents.

For more information and to find out how to set one up visit

<http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/policy/doorstopperswelcome.cfm>

Trading Standards Institute (TSI)

TSI is a training and membership organisation that has represented the interests of the Trading Standards profession since 1881 nationally and internationally. We aim to raise the profile of the profession while working towards fairer, better informed and safer consumer and business communities.

TSI's members are engaged in delivering frontline trading standards services in local authorities and in businesses. We are also supporting the delivery of initiatives such as the advice services Consumer Direct, UK ECC and UK ECCS.