

Be alarmed by offers of “free” burglar alarms, urges TSI

Trading standards across the country are reporting complaints of companies scaring consumers into accepting a free burglar alarm which then ties the victim to a contract costing thousands of pounds.

The Trading Standards Institute is urging consumers to say no to companies offering these free appliances, claiming they are working with the police or as part of a Government scheme, or that they are researching for a fire and security alarm system company.

The salesman will typically cold call, keen to make a home visit the same day to discuss the installation of a free or cheap alarm. The companies are reported to use high pressure tactics and to scaremonger about rising crime levels in the area, while some are reported to make misleading claims about the alarms being directly linked to the police or the availability of a hotline to police patrol cars. What they fail to mention are the fees that residents will have to pay for the monitoring, upkeep and rapid response facilities, which can add up to thousands of pounds.

Some have found themselves tied to a six-year contract agreement costing up to £6,000.

Consumers who sign on the dotted line will have a seven day cooling off period during which they can change their minds – but if the consumer then agrees in writing for installation to take place within this period they are waiving this consumer right.

TSI’s chief executive Ron Gainsford said: “These companies seem to be working their way from one area to another so we would urge residents across the country to be on their guard.

“Consumers should never feel rushed to sign up to anything and remember the mantra: any deal that is too good to be true, probably is.

”Salesmen trying to sell you something over the phone or on your doorstep could be anyone.

“Talk to family, friends or neighbours if you are unsure or worried, or contact Consumer Direct, who will be able to advise and refer the case to the relevant trading standards department where appropriate.”

Consumers should always use a company recommended buy a friend or found in a local approved trader scheme, and where possible ask for three quotes.

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

Trading standards services that have reported complaints: Oxfordshire, Essex, London Borough of Redbridge, Kent, Surrey, North Lanarkshire and Torfaen

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.

Consumer Direct

Consumer Direct is the national helpline and online service providing clear and practical consumer advice. The service is managed by the OFT and delivered in partnership with local authority Trading Standards Services. Should you need help and advice please contact Consumer Direct by calling 08454 04 05 06 or through the website

www.consumerdirect.gov.uk