

Bogus Workmen: If in doubt – keep them out



If in doubt – keep them out is the message Police Scotland wants the community to think about after a number of recent calls in the region about the practices of cold callers to a number of homes offering to carry out tarmac and driveway work.

Complaints have been received about workmen inflating the final price after giving an earlier lower quote for the work carried out and false claims about the services actually being provided.

Constable Nathan Moore at Castle Douglas said, “Over the past week or so we have received a number of calls from the public about workmen cold calling on householders offering to carry out work on driveways, as they were working locally and had spare material left. The victims felt that they were being pressured into accepting work, and then receiving demands for inflated prices after an original price had been agreed. In one case the price more than doubled from around £4000 to over £9000 once the work was completed.

“We have been in touch with our colleagues in Trading Standards regarding these cases and would offer the following advice to householders when confronted by cold callers:-

- Do not feel pressurised into agreeing immediate work. Never listen to scare stories and beware of traders who suddenly appear after storms, floods or even snow and avoid claims that a low price is only available if you sign up right away.
- Do not agree to buy from the first person who calls. Ask yourself if you really want these goods or services.

- Do not pay cash up front. Never pay for work before it is completed and don't hand over large sums of money.
- Do shop around if you decide you need work done. Get a minimum of three quotes from reputable traders. Why not consider the council's Trusted Trader Scheme – which is administered by the Trading Standards Department and can provide details of reliable local traders to carry out work around your home or garden. Details can be found at www.dumgal.gov.uk/trustedtrader
- Do report them. Don't ever feel embarrassed if you feel you have been the victim of doorstep crime. If you feel threatened, unsafe or suspicious of a caller then contact police immediately on 999. If you see something suspicious in your area or want more advice on doorstep crime than contact police on 101, taking note of descriptions of people and vehicles used where possible. You can also contact police anonymously through the Crimestoppers number on 0800 555 111.

“Police Scotland do not recommend dealing with cold callers for property maintenance and repairs to your home,” says Constable Moore, “and working together we can ensure that we can drive down the number of reports of doorstep crime we receive each year.”