

Police Scotland launch campaign to stop public buying stolen goods



Police Scotland is launching a campaign to deter the public from buying potentially stolen goods, which fund serious and organised crime.

With the festive period now under way, people across the country will begin their Christmas shopping, with many on the hunt for a bargain.

However, officers are warning shoppers not to spend their money on any items that have been stolen from a home or business.

Over the past few years, tackling housebreaking throughout Scotland has been a policing priority and many areas have seen a significant reduction in crimes of this nature.

But where items are stolen as a result of housebreaking, theft or robbery, and not recovered, many end up being sold on to the public – often at a cheaper price than you would find in a high street store, or online.

Selling on, or taking possession of stolen goods is known as resetting and police want to highlight to shoppers that buying stolen property is unacceptable as it helps fund further criminal activity.

In the coming weeks, officers will be liaising with second-hand retailers in all major towns and cities to identify any items that may have been obtained as a result of an acquisitive crime offence and to improve the information-sharing protocol between these businesses and Police Scotland.

Visits will also be paid to markets and stalls in various regions to ensure all goods being sold have been lawfully procured for sale.

The public have a vital role to play in helping stop reset crimes, by questioning the origin of anything they are considering buying and refusing to purchase the items if there is any doubt.

Detective Supt Cat Henderson, who is leading this campaign, said: "While it is natural to look for the best deal when buying any product, it is not acceptable to view the purchase of stolen goods as a cheaper alternative to buying in-store or online. In fact, it is a criminal offence to knowingly take possession of any item that has been obtained by criminal means.

"Resetting stolen property is not a victimless crime. Often the things being stolen are from another member of the public's home and were intended as a gift for a loved one or friend. Alternatively, they are

taken from commercial businesses who then make claims on their insurance and have to raise their own prices as a result.

“What our investigations into resetting often find, is that those involved are part of a wider chain of organised crime and it is the profit made from selling stolen goods that then funds more significant criminal activity.

“Acquisitive crime in any form will not be tolerated and if you chose to buy an item where you either know, or believe it to be stolen, it could result in you receiving a criminal conviction.

“Please only buy from reputable sources and if you are in any doubt whatsoever, do not make the purchase and notify police.”

Stephanie Karte from Retailers Against Crime said:

“Shoplifting and thefts from shops can have serious consequences for retailers in terms of profitability and continued viability. We would encourage anyone looking for bargains online to be wary of where products seem too good to be true.

“Buying online doesn’t always come with any guarantees. Buying from reputable retailers provides customer protection in terms of returns policies which ensure that buyers can buy in full confidence.”

Sandra Harkness, Chair of the Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland commented: “In the lead up to Christmas I

would urge consumers to make sure they are buying genuine goods from genuine sellers, all too often when expensive items are sold cheaply they are fake or stolen. The sale of counterfeit goods in particular creates an unfair trading environment, meaning that our many law abiding businesses have to compete with the availability of goods which are cheaper and of inferior quality, and that consumers spending their hard earned money are being ripped off.

Due to the illegal nature of counterfeiting, production is unregulated, meaning that goods often do not meet safety standards. Counterfeit electrical goods, medicines, cosmetics, alcohol and tobacco can also be particularly dangerous and in some cases fatal.

Consumers may think they are getting a bargain but it is more likely that they would risk wasting their cash. The trade in fake goods also supports serious crime such as drug dealing, human trafficking and prostitution. In addition, those who trade in fakes pay no taxes and could be illegally claiming benefits In the UK. This illicit trade is believed to cost the economy over £9 billion in lost revenue, almost 60,000 jobs and £4 billion in unpaid tax."