

Watch out for Suspicious Callers at Your Door

Local police have put out a double warning about suspicious callers at your door this summer. There is an increase in the number of travelling criminals/rogue traders currently operating within Thames Valley. And there is new concern about the number of distraction burglaries.

Around 20 different trading names have so far been identified (often the same people using different names) across the region who are cold calling and offering a range of services including tree lopping, landscape gardening, replacement UPVC windows and guttering, block paving or tarmac of driveways and, particularly after the recent bad weather, roof and gutter cleaning.

As they are inclined to target the elderly, police are keen to know when and where they are operating so please call the police on the non emergency number 0845 8 505 505 if they are cold calling in your neighbourhood. Try to obtain the name of the company (if any), type of vehicle and registration as well as a description of the cold callers. When calling please request that PC Jim McGuinness, who is co-ordinating the information, is notified.

PC McGuinness has also requested that if you receive any flyers or business cards (please note that although most only list mobile phone numbers some of these people do have land line numbers so don't assume that makes them genuine) would you please forward them to him at: Thames Valley Police, Amersham, Bucks HP6 5ZS. Please note this is a FREEPOST address so no stamp is required. Remember to include your contact details.

Jackie Murdock, TVP's Intelligence Development Officer, repeated the appeal for information about suspicious callers when she addressed the quarterly meeting of Ascot NW scheme co-ordinators in July.

Her concern was about distraction burglaries, where the criminals often operate in pairs: one engaging the householder in conversation while the other breaks in at the rear to steal cash or items (an average of £700 is stolen this way in the Thames Valley).

They often pose as Water Board officials, or occasionally as police officers with fake ID cards. Sometimes they ask to use the phone, claiming their car has broken down, or even children call asking if anyone has seen their 'lost' pet.

Vulnerable members of the community are frequently targeted, particularly white females over 70 or disabled people.

If you do get suspicious callers like this, it is vital to call the police on the 0845 number, said Jackie, because if they haven't actually got into your house then they'll try somewhere else and the police need to know they are operating in the area.

And it is even more important not to let any cold callers into your home.