Keep your money safe

Sussex Police fraud newsletter – May 2016

Each month, we see scammers targeting Sussex residents in an attempt to defraud them. Operation Signature is our answer, preventing frauds and scams and supporting vulnerable victims.

This newsletter covers the latest incidents across Sussex to help prevent others becoming a victim. Here, we also share examples of good work, such as our operation with Trading Standards colleagues to crack down on rogue traders and prevent doorstep crime.

By their very nature, scams are constantly evolving and taking on new forms. But be assured that, by following our tips at the bottom of this newsletter and encouraging family, friends and colleagues to do so too, you will reduce the risk of becoming a victim.

Detective Chief Inspector Tracy Edwards, Operation Signature, Sussex Police

Do not let criminals access your computer remotely

We continue to receive reports of “police ransomware”, where fraudsters use pop-up adverts impersonating the police or other legitimate organisations, such as Microsoft, to defraud victims. The scam works by criminals gaining remote access to your computer and demanding a payment for it to be unlocked. Treat unsolicited emails with suspicion and do not click on links within them and install antivirus software and latest software updates to protect yourself. For more information, visit www.protectyourprivates.co.uk.

Sussex Police in national crack down on rogue traders

Rogue traders and forceful doorstep sellers were targeted in a national day of action on Wednesday 13 April 2016 as part of a weeklong crime prevention initiative. In Sussex, activities ranged from identifying vehicles used by criminals through automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) to conducting intelligence-led patrols in areas where older or vulnerable people live.

Chief Inspector Simon Nelson, Neighbourhood Policing, Sussex Police, said: “Rogue trading is a problem which often disproportionately impacts upon some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. Rogue traders often travel long distances to commit offences, which is why we are supporting this nationwide crackdown. I’m delighted that we have been able to target these types of offenders, with some excellent results.”

Need to know information about rogue traders:

- It is not illegal for traders to sell at the door.
- Legitimate callers won’t mind if you shut and lock the door while you check.
- Rogue traders often offer gardening work or maintenance services at attractive rates but the quality of work is substandard, unnecessary or overpriced.
Warning to be vigilant when booking your summer break or timeshare

It’s the time of year when many of us are thinking about booking a summer holiday, and reports of holiday fraud are growing. A new report shows that, nationwide, fraudsters stole £11.5 million from unsuspecting holidaymakers and other travellers in 2015. The most common type is airline ticket fraud, and we’ve also had reports from Sussex residents who have been targeted for timeshare fraud from overseas.

The majority of those who are defrauded pay by methods such as bank transfer or cash with no means of getting their money back. Check whether the company you book with is a member of a registered trade body such as ABTA. Further information and tips can be found here: www.getsafeonline.org

Do you know a vulnerable person being targeted by telephone scams?

As part of Operation Signature, Sussex Police have purchased 100 call blockers to help protect those most vulnerable to telephone scams. The trueCall (www.truecall.com) devices work by automatically ensuring that only trusted callers already known to the user can get through. Unrecognised callers are asked for their identity before they are put through to the recipient, meaning that unknown or ‘cold’ callers can be refused.

We may be able to help if a vulnerable person in Sussex cannot afford to purchase the system. Please get in touch with your local Neighbourhood Policing Team (details on www.sussex.police.uk) for further information.

Remember: banks and police will NEVER call and ask you to transfer funds to a new account, NEVER collect your cards from your home, NEVER ask you to buy high value goods and NEVER ask you to hand over cards or money.

Keep your money safe with these tips:
- Check people are who they say they are. Not sure? Don’t open the door!
- Never send or give money to people you don’t know or trust
- Remember to protect your identity – don’t share your personal information with unexpected callers
- Beware of email and computer scams. Treat all emails from unknown senders with suspicion and never click on links within them
- Never share your PIN number or enter your PIN into a telephone
- If in doubt, phone a relative, friend or someone you know personally.

If you suspect someone you know may be vulnerable to fraud, please share this newsletter with them and encourage them to look at the ‘Little Book of Scams’, available on the following link: http://tinyurl.com/z8khtgh.

If you or someone you know is vulnerable and has been a victim of fraud or scams call Sussex Police on 101 or visit www.sussex.police.uk

If you need to report a scam or fraud, you can do so by contacting Action Fraud at www.actionfraud.police.uk/report_fraud or by calling 0300 123 2040. You can also read the latest Action Fraud alerts at www.actionfraud.police.uk/news or by following @actionfrauduk on Twitter.