

Scam Marshal Newsletter

October 2024

Total Scam Marshals across the UK: 2,627



**NATIONAL
TRADING
STANDARDS**

Scams Team

Welcome to your October Scam Marshal quarterly newsletter

In this edition we'll examine how the impending digital takeover brings risks of new scams, such as faulty or non-existent pendant alarms. We'll also explore the growing QR code scams and give advice about how to protect yourself against these.

The Digital Switchover and Pendant Alarm Scams

Criminals use current events and times of uncertainty as an opportunity to prey on people's worries and anxieties. By 2027, most residential phones will be plugged into internet routers rather than the wall socket in their homes. These sockets will become redundant, and we will now make our phone calls across a more reliable, internet enabled network. This is known as the digital switchover.

Criminals are already targeting people who have some sort of telecare device like a fall alarm bracelet that is linked to an Alarm Response Centre through a phone line. They are saying that because of the digital switchover, their current equipment will no longer work and that they must upgrade to new equipment. A lot of these scams are just a ploy to get banking details and to steal money, but some are selling non-approved, faulty equipment that won't work in an emergency.

Protect yourself:

- If you or a loved one has one of these devices, contact the company or local authority that originally provided it and ask them about the digital switchover and if the current system will continue to work.
- If you are called out of the blue, verify the information using a trusted source or by visiting the TSA website (www.tsa-voice.org.uk) to check if the company is registered with them.
- If you are being bombarded with scam and nuisance calls, consider the use of call blocking technology. Your phone provider may be able to provide this type of technology, and some are free. Be sure to use a product that will work on the new digital phone system.

Return address: FREEPOST, NTSST, MAIL MARSHALS

When you send us your scam mail please keep the letter/s in their original envelope and write the date received as it will help with our investigations. If you need more Freepost envelopes contact us on 01323 XXXXXX or email friendsagainstscams@surreycc.gov.uk.

QR Code Scams increasing as criminals exploit technology

A Quick Response (QR) code is digital code that will take the consumer to a new webpage or app via a mobile phone camera.

QR Codes are scanned in places like car parks and restaurants taking people (Insert QR code) directly to a payment screen or menu. This makes it easier for customers to access the services they need.

If you scan this QR code, it will take you through to our Friends Against Scams website:



Criminals have been creating their own QR codes and sticking them over official ones in car parks. This means drivers use the wrong QR Code which takes them through to the criminals' payment page to 'pay' for their parking. Not only are the victims being scammed but they are also not buying a legitimate ticket. This means they are also at risk of receiving parking tickets for unpaid parking.

Protect yourself:

- Check the QR code you are scanning for evidence of tampering, if it looks suspicious, don't scan it.
- Sometimes people are asked to download a QR code scanner onto their smartphone and these apps have also been linked to scams. Most smart phone cameras have the QR code scanning facility on them so you should always use your phone camera to scan them.
- When you scan a QR code, the link should appear for you to press on to take you through to the website/payment. Check it before clicking on the link, does this link look right?

Friends Against Scams

The National Trading Standards Scams Team raises awareness of mass marketing fraud through the Friends Against Scams initiative. Anyone can complete the free online training at www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk, or attend a face-to-face meeting organised by one of over 2,000 SCAMchampion volunteers throughout the UK.

www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk has a free short (15min) scams awareness course that can help you protect yourself and loved ones from scams. Anyone completing this session becomes a Friend. So far, over 1,100,000 people have completed this training, helping to take a stand against scams. You can complete the training at www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk/elearning/coop.

Action Fraud – 0300 123 2040 – www.Actionfraud.police.uk

Police Scotland – 101 (from within Scotland) - www.scotland.police.uk

Citizens Advice – 0808 223 1133 – www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Citizens Advice Scotland - 0800 028 1456 - www.cas.org.uk