

get

**SCAM
WISE**

They're just
out to get your
money.

**Don't fall
for it!**

**Advice from Trading
Standards about
Mailing Scams**



**SCAM
WISE**
Southwest

A campaign by
Trading Standards in
South West England
to help stop people
being conned by
rogue traders.



Don't be ripped off by mailing scams

All of us have received junk mail through our letterboxes at some time. Most of us find it a nuisance but from time to time more sinister scam mail can arrive - here are some examples.

Trading Standards advise you to put all junk mail straight into the recycle bin.

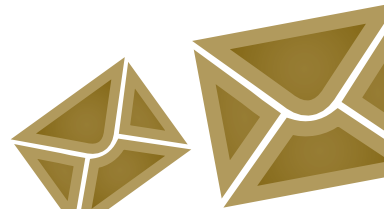
Prize letters

You receive a letter stating you have won or are guaranteed a prize. You are asked to send a small fee or make an expensive phone call to claim the prize. The letter often uses deceptive wording to imply, without ever specifically stating, that you have won the prize.

None of these letters ever pay out any cash prizes. If you do send money, your name may be sold on to other fraudsters and you will find yourself bombarded with letters of a similar nature. These are invariably sent from outside the UK and Europe, with the attendant difficulties in stopping them.

Miracle Cures

You receive unsolicited mail or e-mails claiming to be able to cure an incurable disease or ailment. Trading Standards advise that if a medical claim sounds too good to be true it probably is. Always consult a health care professional before parting with any money for treatments.



Advice from Trading Standards

Never

- Send money or give bank/credit card details or any other personal details.
- Ring a premium rate - 09 - phone number. They make money from the cost of the call.
- Reply to junk mail. You can find your name added to more mailing lists even if you have not sent any money.

Much of this mail is sent from abroad and it is difficult, if not impossible, for the authorities in the UK to control it. Often the address used is an accommodation address. Look out for these addresses which include PO Box or 'suite' numbers. If you respond any money you send is likely to be forwarded abroad. Mailing lists are sold from one rogue firm to another.

Most people who send money get nothing. If they do receive something it is usually cheap and shoddy and certainly not worth the money they paid. If you send money to a firm that is based abroad, you are unlikely to get your money back if things go wrong.

Government departments and Trading Standards do their best to publicise the risks of responding to this type of mail through leaflets, talks and press, TV and radio features.

be
SCAM
WISE
Trading
Standards
say

**“Throw these
letters in the
recycle bin”**

**...and save
yourself £££s**





Put junk mail straight in the recycle bin

Chain Letters

You receive a letter at your home address telling you of a miraculous way that you can earn vast sums of money. Usually your instructions are to send £10 to a name and address, then send copies of the letter to names and addresses you are asked to gather from the phone book. Chain letters like these have been circulating the country for years without real evidence of anyone being able to make the huge profits that they claim will result. These letters are usually very difficult to trace back to an original sender having passed through dozens of hands.

Trading Standards say **never** give your financial or personal details to someone you don't know.

Foreign Money Laundering

These come in the form of e-mails or letters and invite you to give your bank details in order for the writer to 'transfer' money into this country. In return you are offered a percentage of the millions which will be passing through your account. A high percentage of these mailings claim to be from residents of African Countries.

You run the risk of losing all the money in your bank account if you decide to take up this offer.

These scams are well-known as international fraud and are investigated by the police.

A website has been set up where details of these scams can be logged – you can find it at

www.nafn.gov.uk

Phone Consumer Direct for help and advice on 08454 04 05 06

Overseas and other lottery scams

Don't respond to requests for you to send money to claim 'winnings' from overseas lottery programmes.

The scam starts when people respond to mail, e-mails or phone calls (often sent from Canada, Australia or Spain) telling them they are being entered in a national lottery or some other prize draw. They soon receive a phone call congratulating them on winning the 'big prize'. However, before they can claim the prize, victims are told they must send money to pay for taxes and processing fees.

Often these calls are repeated and people send more money. UK consumers have lost thousands of pounds through such schemes. The prize doesn't exist and they never receive any winnings in return for their cash.

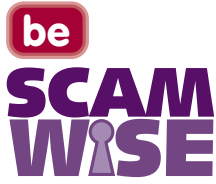
These scams usually ask for personal details - full name, date of birth, next of kin, bank account - and once you have given these they will ask for a substantial amount to "claim" your prize, to "register" and to pay "taxes". **DON'T REPLY!**

If you have lost money and become a victim of an overseas scam, the oft would like to hear from you. Contact them by calling

0845 722 4499

Or you can report the matter to Consumer Direct.

Phone Consumer Direct for help and advice on 08454 04 05 06



Never send money to “claim” money

Predictions for the Future

A “psychic” writes to you, giving vague predictions for the future and suggesting that someone is going to cause you harm or that bad luck is about to befall you. The letter then asks you to send a sum of money to the “psychic” in order to protect you from harm. The Office of Fair Trading is currently collating complaints with a view to taking action to stop these potentially menacing communications being sent out.

Someone with your surname has died abroad leaving a large estate

You receive an unsolicited e-mail from abroad. This claims that someone with the same surname as you has died and that as they have no other living relatives you are entitled to their large estate simply because you have the same surname. If you do get in touch to try and claim this money you will be strung along for cash and bank account details in much the same way as if you had responded to the African money laundering scam mentioned above.

Money making schemes

You are sent a letter stating that the sender has discovered a marvellous way of making lots of money, a scheme they will tell you about for a small fee. You send the money and you get a letter telling you to send out adverts of the type you initially received or something equally worthless.

Undelivered packages

You are left a note in the post stating that a courier has failed to deliver a package from overseas or containing perishable goods. You read the small print and find that you have to ring an 09 premium rate number to retrieve the package. This call may last for 7 to 13 minutes, at a charge rate of £1.50 per minute, your parcel is costing you £10 to £20, but is likely to be of little value, e.g. some vouchers or a cheap gift.

To complain about traders using premium rate numbers you can contact:

ICSTIS on 0800 500 212
www.icstis.org.uk

Shopping and Consumer Surveys

You may receive these in the post. They often ask for very personal information - date of birth, next of kin - and invite you to receive information about goods and services.

In the wrong hands, such information can be used later on to deceive you into thinking you are being contacted by a “trusted” source.

Trading Standards advise you to be very cautious when responding to such surveys.

Remember

Throw it away if the letter contains:

- A request for money.
- Addresses that are PO Boxes, suite numbers or based abroad.
- A request for your bank account details. Report it to your bank first.
- Instructions to call a telephone number beginning 09.



**about
mailing
scams**

If you receive any letters like those we have described, simply tear them up and throw them in the recycle bin.

You can help reduce the amount of junk mail which lands on your doormat by registering with the mailing preference service (MPS).

You can do this by calling them on

0845 7034599

or filling in the on-line registration form at

www.mpsonline.org.uk/mpsr/

**To contact Trading Standards and Consumer Direct
telephone 08454 04 05 06
or log onto www.consumerdirect.gov.uk**



funded by government

Consumer Direct is delivered in partnership with the Office of Fair Trading and local authority Trading Standards across the South West of England.

