

High Pressure Sales / Distraction Burglaries

Guidance to Clients on Private Companies' Selling Techniques

Should any client contact a private or commercial company with an enquiry, either on their own consideration or on advice from RACDV or others, or should any client receive unsolicited contact from any private company, in regard to the potential purchase of a service or goods, Clients should be aware that, whilst many companies are thoroughly reputable, some are not, and employ various underhand or high pressure techniques to achieve a sale. Frail elderly and disabled people can be particularly vulnerable and the following should be borne strongly in mind at all times.

- When contacting any company, for any reason - even an innocent initial enquiry, clients should be aware that if they give their name, address or telephone number, they may be subject to further contact by that company – whose motivation will normally be to purely achieve a sale.
- Such further contact may be by post, telephone, e-mail or personal visit.
- If the client agrees to some one calling from the company, they are strongly advised to have someone with them for assistance and moral support.
- The client should be aware that the person calling is normally a Salesman – pure & simple - although they may call themselves a variety of other names such as a representative, consultant, advisor, technical advisor, etc.
- Very often, these Sales men or women – are paid by commission only, or mainly commission, so they will be very anxious to achieve a sale under any circumstances. They can be very persuasive and may often be charging greatly inflated prices or offering unrealistic and inflated discounts. Do not be fooled.
- Clients receiving any Salesman should ensure that they **never** make a decision on the day of the Salesman visit. They should take at least a couple of days to think the matter over and preferably get a minimum of three quotations – preferably in writing - before deciding. Salesman are trained and very experienced in raising peoples interest on the day and to achieve the sale on the day whilst the customers interest is highest - often by promising special discounts or gifts etc if the client agrees that day, but those special discounts or gifts are nearly always false or greatly exaggerated and should nearly always not be seriously considered.
- Generally, clients should never ever do any business at their front door or with any person calling them unexpectedly. We strongly recommend you always use a company through personal recommendation from a friend or relative or contact Age Concern for a recommendation or advice.
- Should anyone call without appointment or arrangement, or normally even if such an arrangement has been made, the client will have by law – under the distance selling regulations - a cooling off period of a minimum 7 days during which they may cancel any contract or agreement to buy. Such cancellations may be made by telephone and confirmed in writing
- If the client uses a credit card for paying for any purchases over £100, the credit card Company will hold joint liability in any disputes. Otherwise, a cheque payment is preferable to cash as the client will have a record & proof of the date and amount of payment – and could indeed stop the cheque within a short while if they change their mind and cancel.
- Clients are advised to use only established reputable companies and normally obtain a clearly written estimate which states exactly what work or items are to be supplied, in what time scale, what the full payment is, when such full payment is required, and how such payment can be made. Clients are advised to obtain a minimum of three such estimates and choose the company they feel comfortable with and best suits their purpose and finances.
- Clients are advised **not** to make a full payment in advance. They should agree or negotiate the lowest possible advance deposit and only pay the balance due on completion of the work or supply when you are satisfied.

- Any client not sure of what to do in any circumstances may contact Age Concern for further advice either at the Age Concern Office listed above or out of hours on 07889 133633 which is available all day every day.
- The Kent Trading Standards Office advises that if something appears to good to be true - it probably is !

Basic Guidance on Distraction Burglaries

Age Concern suggest clients be mindful of people they do not know calling at their door with various excuses. This could well be a distraction burglary attempt, where the callers attempt to enter your home to steal whatever they can find and leave within minutes. They may use excuses such as they are from the Police, Council, Gas or Electricity Company, Water Board and need to check something or are conducting a Survey. They may for example say their child has lost a ball/toy in the back garden or their pet has got into your garden. They may try to distract you by taking you into the kitchen or bathroom etc to 'check something' whilst an accomplice slips into your home through the door you have left open, to steal. They may rarely use force. These people use various methods and it is highly preferable that you are careful and suspicious of unknown callers and do not let them into your home – unless you are sure of who they are. Genuine callers will not mind waiting whilst you make checks, calling back or using a password system you can set up with the company in advance. Be wary of any ID badges shown as whilst these may be genuine, badges are reasonably easy to forge. Never check by calling a telephone number given to you by the caller, always check the appropriate number yourself from your papers, telephone book or Directory Enquiries. It may even be advisable not to even open your door unless you know the person – it is a judgement you need to make. If you are confident a person is genuine, you could let him/her into your home on their own, close the door firmly behind the two of you, and keep that caller in your view at all times. You could also help yourself by only keeping the minimum amount of money and valuables in your home, especially smaller items like Jewellery, Passports, Driving Licences, Credit Cards, and keeping even these minimum items in a secure and careful place – the criminals who attempt this type of crime are very clever knowing where to look and can be in and out of your home in minutes, even seconds. If you do find items missing after a caller, check your home for what is missing and call the Police without delay – try to recall what the caller was wearing, what they looked like, any distinctive features, and the times involved.

Remember, adopt sensible and regular caller security procedures and you will help to minimise the risk of becoming a victim.

Please feel free to contact Age Concern for further advice – we would be more than happy to assist in any manner we are able.