

Please use this section to notify us of any trading malpractices etc you wish to report:

Where did you see this newsletter?

Have you any comments or suggestions which might improve the usefulness or contents of this newsletter?

Please return this slip to the address shown below:

Sheffield Trading Standards  
2 - 10 Carbrook Hall Road  
Sheffield S9 2DB

Please use this section to notify us of any trading malpractices etc you wish to report:

Where did you see this newsletter?

Have you any comments or suggestions which might improve the usefulness or contents of this newsletter?

Please return this slip to the address shown below:

Sheffield Trading Standards  
2 - 10 Carbrook Hall Road  
Sheffield S9 2DB

# Twelve tips for a very Happy Christmas



As the festive season approaches many people's thoughts turn to buying presents for family and friends. South Yorkshire Trading Standards Services have issued the following seasonal shopping advice and tips to ensure consumers have a Happy Christmas:

- \* Always keep your receipts – they prove when and where you purchased goods.
- \* Look out for counterfeit goods, especially alcohol and perfume as they may be unsafe.
- \* Check if gift vouchers have an expiry date.
- \* Order goods to be delivered in plenty of time – delivery can often take up to 28 days.
- \* If you make purchases by mail order or on the Internet you have additional rights, such as a cooling off period – ring Consumer Direct for more information.
- \* Pay for items over £100 on a credit card for added protection.
- \* Remember when asking for a refund that traders may only refund back onto your credit card if that is how you paid.
- \* You have the same consumer rights with sale goods as you do with full price goods.

- \* Remember that street traders may not be there to return goods to after Christmas.
- \* You are not entitled to a refund because something is unwanted or you change your mind – check out the trader's returns policy for unwanted presents.
- \* Check you are not overcharged in restaurants and bars during the busy festive period.
- \* Be credit-wise – Christmas is not worth a year in debt!

If any difficulties do occur and you wish to seek advice, you can contact **Consumer Direct** on **08454 04 05 06**. The lines are open from 8.00am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday and 9.00am to 1.00pm Saturdays.



Clear, practical consumer advice is only a phone call away...

## CONTACT DETAILS

**BARNSELEY**  
Metropolitan Borough Council

**Trading Standards**  
Central Offices, Kendray Street,  
Barnsley, S70 2TN  
Consumer Advice: 08454 040506  
General Enquiries: 01226 772532  
Fax: 01226 775699  
e-mail:  
tradingstandards@barnsley.gov.uk  
www.barnsley.gov.uk

**Doncaster**  
Metropolitan Borough Council

**Trading Standards Service**  
PO Box 257, The Council House,  
College Road, Doncaster, DN1 1RN  
Consumer Advice: 08454 040506  
General Enquiries: 01302 862365  
Fax: 01302 737950  
e-mail:  
tradingstandards@doncaster.gov.uk  
www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/doncaster

**Rotherham**  
Metropolitan Borough Council

**Trading Standards**  
Howard Building, College Lane,  
Rotherham, S65 1AX  
Consumer Advice: 08454 040506  
General Enquiries: 01709 823151  
Fax: 01709 823143  
e-mail:  
tradingstandards@rotherham.gov.uk  
www.rotherham.gov.uk

**Sheffield**  
City Council

**Trading Standards**  
2 - 10 Carbrook Hall Road,  
Sheffield, S9 2DB  
Consumer Advice: 08454 040506  
General Enquiries: 0114 2736290  
Fax: 0114 2736248  
e-mail:  
tradingstandards@sheffield.gov.uk  
www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/sheffield

The South Yorkshire Trading Standards Services Newsletter is a joint production by Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield Trading Standards Services



# SOUTH YORKSHIRE NEWSLETTER TRADING STANDARDS SERVICES

Issue No: 6

Winter 2006

## Avoid a Counterfeit Catastrophe this Christmas

Oh no, its Christmas again! The annual scramble around the shops for presents, spending too much money and then the financial hang-over to explain to the bank manager in the new year.

As the old saying goes: "Clothes maketh the man" - and the rest of the family for that matter. We're all partial to some nice designer gear so we can 'dress to impress' at parties, but have you seen the prices! My friend knows a mate whose got a clothing business with another mate, and although they seem to only work local markets and pub car parks, my friend says all their stuff is top quality, the real deal, just a lot cheaper than the High Street. No overheads see!

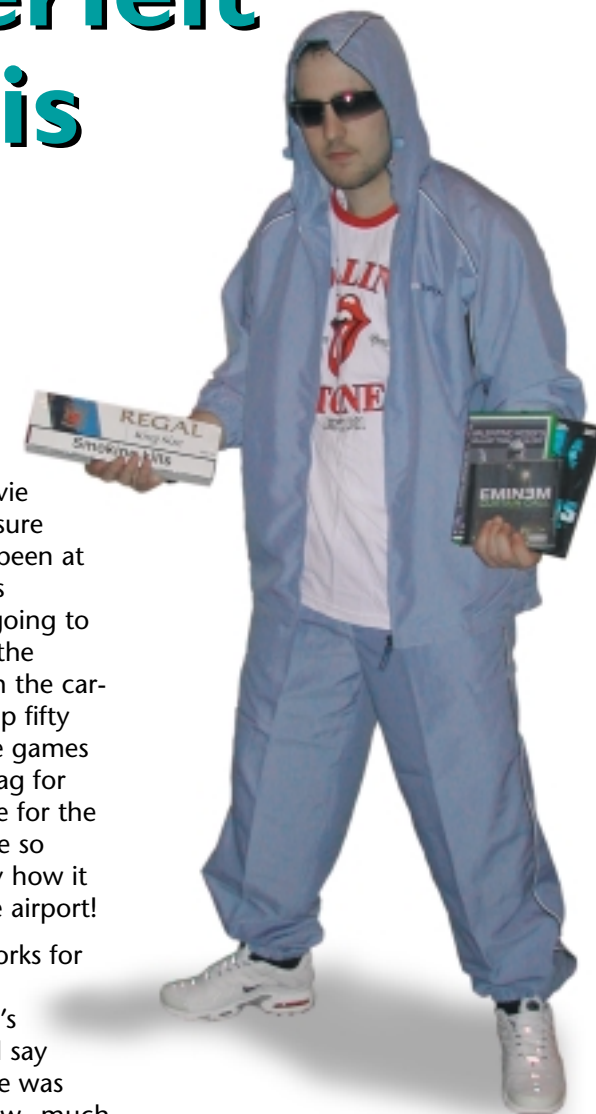
Ok, even if the stuff is fake, copies or look-a-likes, where's the harm in that. Two cheeky chaps, trying to make a living like everyone else. These big companies charge far too much for the real thing, they're just ripping off the public. My friend's mates are doing us a favour.

So, I've got myself sorted for Christmas with a smart designer jacket, cool jeans, a pair of wicked trainers and a posh watch that's guaranteed for life - well, the real one is! My friend's mate doesn't give guarantees, in fact he doesn't give receipts either. Still, you wouldn't tell the watch from a real one and he claims it will always show the right time at least twice a day!

Christmas is about giving so I'm not just treating myself. My friend's mate knows someone else who flogs music CD's and DVD films. He's got every record or movie you could think of, and I'm sure some of them haven't even been at the local cinema yet. He says business is booming and is going to go 'on-line' - the internet is the future and a lot warmer than the car-boot sale! Bagged me the top fifty albums, a handful of console games for the kids, designer handbag for Gran and some nice perfume for the wife - that brand they charge so much for in duty free. Funny how it always smells different in the airport!

I have another friend - he works for Trading Standards. I haven't introduced him to my friend's mates but talking to him, I'd say he's met plenty like them. He was telling me about just how much counterfeit stuff is out there. Not just clothing and accessories but almost everything. If we can buy it, chances are somebody, somewhere, can fake it. Computer software, clothing, sunglasses, films, music, sports equipment, washing powder, posters, photographs, paintings, perfumes and cosmetics. Then there's whiskeys, vodka and all manner of food and drink, including tea bags and coffee! Really worrying is the market in

continued overleaf...



Faking it! This cheeky chappy is completely kitted out with counterfeit clobber confiscated by Trading Standards in South Yorkshire

**Already seized this year...**  
Over 2000 pairs of Trainers  
Around 20,000 items of clothing  
1000's of DVD's, CD's & Games  
100's of Concert T Shirts  
1000's of packs of cigarettes  
Watches, Sunglasses etc, etc

...continued from front page

counterfeit medicines, DIY tools and car spares - downright dangerous if you ask me! Even cigarettes these days. We are not talking cheap imports from abroad, but fake fags! Who knows what's in them! I'm partial to the occasional gasper myself and I know they're bad for me, but I'd like to think I was doing myself no good with the genuine article. It's shocking!

Christmas turned out to be a real turkey! I was late fetching Gran for Christmas dinner because my watch had stopped. The kids complained their new computer games wouldn't play and the wife says her perfume smells like bleach. Never mind, there's still the Christmas DVD to watch - it does look a bit blurred though with strange noises on the soundtrack, perhaps the Telly's on the blink but wait a minute - who's that bloke walking across the screen carrying an ice cream back to his seat!

☆☆☆☆

Trading Standards in South Yorkshire are increasingly finding inferior, illegally copied and often unsafe goods on sale to consumers. The better the fake, the harder it gets for consumers to tell the difference. These goods are imported or produced by unscrupulous individuals and business, capitalising on well-known names and brands.

Piracy and counterfeiting costs legitimate UK businesses millions of pounds every year, as well as jobs. Consumers get ripped-off, whilst their money funds rogue traders and other crime.

Trading Standards officers and the police continue to seize large quantities of counterfeit material and successfully prosecute those behind the scams whenever possible.

For information about how you can spot the fakes and avoid being ripped-off, or to report suspected breaches of the counterfeiting or copyright act, please complete the tear-off slip at the end of this newsletter. Alternatively, contact your local Trading Standards Service or **Consumer Direct** on **08454 04 05 06**.

## Be a Nosey Neighbour

**As the dark evenings arrive so does the perceived fear of crime amongst the elderly and vulnerable in our society. The fact is that more people are 'ripped off' in broad daylight by the rogue traders who make their living this way.**

If you are at home during the day just keep an eye out for your elderly neighbours and relatives. Take note of any strangers calling at doors. Speak to the person who has been visited to find out what the visit was about and if it was unsolicited. Don't be afraid of being thought of as a 'busybody' - the doorknockers rely on other residents turning a blind eye and allowing them to continue preying on the elderly and vulnerable. If you see the visitor getting into a vehicle make a note of the registration number, colour and model. If the stranger's visit was unsolicited or suspicious, pass the vehicle details on to the Police or phone **Consumer Direct** on **08454 04 05 06** and report the matter to them.

Favourite ploys used by doorstep sellers include domestic appliance repairs, security equipment salesmen, and people claiming to be recently released from prison, selling dusters and similar household goods. This latter being a recent ploy - imagine



Take note of any strangers calling on elderly neighbours, and ask what the visit was about

the picture it may put in the mind of an elderly person having a young man on the doorstep telling them he has just come out of prison! No pressure there then for that person to buy a couple of dusters just to get rid of him! The reality of the situation is that these doorstep sellers operate in teams and are dropped off from a minibus in an area which they work for two or three hours before being picked up and taken back to their home town.

Don't forget - be a 'Nosey Neighbour' and look after the interests and wellbeing of your elderly neighbours, relatives and friends. One day you may be in their position!

## Home Services Directory

Trading Standards Services in South Yorkshire receive many complaints from consumers about poor quality or excessively priced property repair work. However, the majority of businesses in the area are reliable and will do a good job for a fair price.

With this in mind, South Yorkshire Trading Standards Services have compiled the Home Services Directory. This Directory contains details of local trades people who have been vetted and who have agreed to follow the terms and conditions of the scheme. Whether you're a builder, decorator or gardener, or any other trade which involves working in customers' homes, you should join the Directory.

This is an opportunity for legitimate businesses to distinguish themselves from the rogue traders. Only traders who meet the vetting requirements are allowed in the Directory. Trading Standards advice to consumers is that whenever they need a job doing in the home or garden, they should consider using a trades person from the Directory. South Yorkshire traders wanting to join the Directory or find out more about it can contact Barnsley Trading Standards on 01226 772532.

## Fraudulent four brought to book

Four South Yorkshire counterfeiters have been ordered to pay back more than £28,527 or face jail after being pursued by Rotherham Trading Standards, Doncaster Trading Standards, the Department of Works and Pensions and South Yorkshire Police.

The four pled guilty at Sheffield Crown Court towards the end of 2005 for copyright and counterfeiting offences. All received jail sentences ranging from two to ten months.

After an application under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 taken by the Police's Financial Investigations Unit, the defendants attended Hull Crown Court on 29 September 2006.

Two of the defendants were ordered to pay £10,909.57 each. Both were given six months to pay. If the amount is not paid in full by 28 March 2007 both face a 12 month custodial sentence.

One was ordered to pay £5,498.09 and the fourth was ordered to pay £1,209.67. They were each given six months to pay. Failure to do so will see each of them face custodial sentences of 45 days.

Margaret Statham, Rotherham Borough Council's Principal Trading Standards Officer, commented: "It is important to get the message across to the criminal element in Rotherham and South Yorkshire that stringent measures will be taken to combat crimes of this nature. It is equally important for them to realise that we are constantly working in partnership with the Police and other agencies as well as cross border work."

Failure to pay the ordered amount will see the custodial sentences take immediate effect. Once the sentences have been served the defendants will still have to pay the money in full.

This should send a clear message to rogue traders that, not only could they face prosecution and the penalties handed out at that time, they could also face severe financial penalties under the Proceeds of Crime Act.

## Safety campaign sparks fears over unsafe electric blankets

Old or damaged electric blankets cause numerous fires in homes across Britain each year. And each year scores of people are killed and many more injured in such fires.

Electric blankets can develop dangerous faults or become hazardous if their plugs are incorrectly wired or have fuses greater than 3 Amp fitted. Also, if blankets are not stored correctly over the Summer months, they can develop faults in the insulation around the heating elements which can cause fires or electric shock. Experts also recommend that, for safety reasons, electric blankets should be replaced if they are over ten years old.

So, if you've got an electric blanket, it's best to have it checked for safety. In a bid to reduce the risk of accidents occurring, Trading Standards Services in South Yorkshire recently held a safety campaign to test electric blankets. Testing facilities were made available at various locations across the county, and members of the public were invited to bring their blankets along for a free safety check.

Of the 346 electric blankets which were brought in for testing, 29 failed through having unsafe plugs or fuses fitted. New plugs or fuses were fitted to these blankets free of charge by Trading Standards staff.

Of greater concern were 21 electric blankets which, when tested, showed signs that the insulation around the heating elements had broken down. This was very worrying as the blankets in question could have short circuited causing a fire or danger of electrocution to the user.

130 other electric blankets failed the safety check due to unspecified reasons, for instance their excessive age.

One particular electric blanket which was brought in for testing was estimated by Trading Standards staff to be over forty years old. The blanket, when tested, was found to be in a lethal state due to the dilapidated condition of the insulation. In fact, testing equipment identified so many faults on the blanket that it was immediately condemned as unsafe, and removed from its owner for safe disposal. Photographs were taken of the blanket to show the spectacular arcing which occurred when it was tested (see inset picture).



One Sheffield resident, after seeing an advert publicising the safety campaign, actually took time to write a letter to Trading Standards, telling how a close relative died from burns received in a tragic accident involving a house fire caused by a faulty electric blanket. The writer stressed the importance of having electric blankets serviced regularly, and hoped that the campaign would make people realise that the consequences of using a faulty electric blanket could be fatal.

This is a campaign which is held every year, so if you've got an electric blanket look out for next year's campaign - it could save your life!



Please use this tear off slip to contact us if you require further information, or if you wish to report any trading malpractice that you may have experienced.

Name: .....

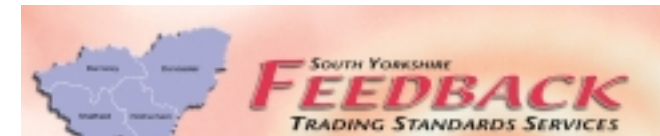
Address: .....

Daytime telephone no: .....

e-mail: .....

I would like further information on: .....

Please use reverse side



Please use this tear off slip to contact us if you require further information, or if you wish to report any trading malpractice that you may have experienced.

Name: .....

Address: .....

Daytime telephone no: .....

e-mail: .....

I would like further information on: .....

Please use reverse side