

**EARLY WARNING MESSAGE!
STOCKPORT BOGUS CALLER TASK GROUP**

ORIGINATOR (Name, agency, telephone, e-mail)

Maria Kildunne

Taken from the Watch Dog Site website:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/consumer/tv_and_radio/watchdog/reports/consumer_goods/consumer_20080512_2.shtml

TIME & DATE OF MESSAGE

15th May 2008

Although this is not a report of an incident or crime that has happened in Stockport – it is very important information that we can disseminate to older people and arm them with information to prevent them becoming a victim – also be aware of copy cat companies who may also try this scam.

WHEN DID IT HAPPEN

Update: 12 May 2008

Helen Lee was called two weeks after our report in March, and believed she was being offered a new warranty on her Sky equipment by Sky itself. She agreed to pay a direct debit of £5, but when her paperwork came through she saw the name Satellite Direct UK Ltd and was concerned because she'd seen the company mentioned on Watchdog. She's on the Telephone Preference Service so shouldn't have been called at all.

After sending a researcher undercover at the company originally, we sent a second Watchdog researcher to get a job there at the end of April. This time he wasn't selling warranties but was assigned to another part of the business called Not Just Aerials. He was trained to cold-call people and sell them television aerials in advance of the digital television switchover.

What his sales script and training pack told him to say, however, was misleading. Although some people may need a new aerial to watch digital TV when the switchover happens, most people won't. The training pack gave pages of notes on how to handle objections by callers, including some telling him that without a new aerial they wouldn't be able to watch television at all after the switchover. This is not true - if a Freeview box works with an existing rooftop aerial then a new aerial is probably not needed.

Richard Bangs was called by Not Just Aerials. He already receives digital television through his current aerial but the caller was insistent that he needed a new one. He's also registered on the Telephone Preference Service so shouldn't have been called.

Digital UK (not to be confused with Satellite Direct UK!), the independent body set up to oversee the digital switchover, said it's angry that people are being misled.

In response to our allegations, Satellite Direct UK Ltd sent us a one-line statement saying that it doesn't make direct sales calls and condemns mis-selling. To try to find out more, Watchdog went to the head office of Satellite Direct UK in Arundel, but no-one would answer any of our questions.

ACTION Request (Delete either Restricted or General)

Please remind people we come into contact with that they probably DO NOT need a new aerial once the switchover happens next year.

If they have not already then they will need a freeview box which can be picked up for around £20/30 and then they can decide if they need a new aerial

For a leaflet explaining the switchover or further advice please contact Age Concern Stockport 0161 480 1211

If a company cold calls you – you can log this with Trading Standards 0845 404 0506

The purpose of circulating this information is to ensure that group members, frontline staff and community champions are aware of possible doorstep crime activity.

If you, a member of staff or community champion believe that a criminal offence has been committed please contact the police immediately.

PLEASE REPORT ANY INFORMATION TO THE POLICE

Emergency: 999

Non Emergency: 0161 872 5050

If you would like any more information on the Stockport Bogus Caller Task Group or be added to this distribution list please contact Maria Kildunne 0161 480 1211