

Notice from An Garda Síochána

Coronavirus (COVID-10) : Crime Prevention Advice on Distraction Burglaries / Bogus Callers

The emergence and spread of Coronavirus (Covid-19) in Ireland is challenging in many respects for all our citizens. At this time we would like to remind our communities that in addition to protecting our health and wellbeing we should also be mindful of our own security.

Opportunist criminals may exploit the spread of Coronavirus (Covid-19) to take advantage of vulnerable people. Distraction burglaries, bogus callers, rogue traders, online and telephone frauds are just some of the crimes we should look out for.

An Garda Síochána are endeavouring to assist as many people as possible during this time. Many other groups, clubs and associations have volunteered their services too. These people are also assisting us in other ways, such as reporting suspicious activity in their locality. Crime prevention is everybody's business after all!

If you require assistance, begin first with trusted people in your family or circle of friends. If you let people into your home be sure it is because you requested their assistance and heed the current HSE advice on social distancing.

We can prevent and reduce distraction burglaries/ bogus callers/ rogue trader crimes by following these simple tips:

- Are you expecting callers? If not, look out the window to get a good view of the caller.
- Have a viewer fitted in your door? You are safer behind a closed door.
- Have a door chain / limiter fitted and keep the chain / limiter on, if you must open the door, use the limiter. Consider installing doorbells that link to your mobile phone.
- Make sure your back door is locked before you answer the front door.
- If you are going to engage, ask for ID – a genuine caller won't mind!
- Don't be embarrassed to tell the caller to leave their contact details and make an appointment.
- Use recommended tradespeople, avoid using the services of cold callers.
- The basic rule is if you don't know the person at your door, you shouldn't let them in.
- If you are anxious contact your local Garda station via telephone at this time.

If you think you have become a victim to this type of crime what should you do?

- Never be embarrassed or ashamed to contact the Gardaí. If the crime is happening dial 999 or 112, otherwise telephone your local Garda Station. The contact details can be found on www.Garda.ie, where, depending on the value of property stolen (up to €1,000) you can also report thefts of property via email.

- Write down all you can remember about what happened to include descriptions of the persons, their clothing, any peculiarities or distinguishing features and any vehicles used by them. Keep safely any documents they may have given you.
- For those people who may have older or vulnerable neighbours or friends, be helpful and advise them of these possible scams and ways of avoiding them. If you suspect that bogus callers or trades people are in your area and appear suspicious or are working in a vulnerable neighbour's home – contact the Gardaí immediately.
- Genuine tradespeople will not be offended by any enquiries the Gardaí may make and, indeed, usually welcome them.
- All the utility companies have advice on their websites and social media in relation to public works or enquiries being carried out in their name.

: Crime Prevention Advice on Telephone and Online Frauds

Fraudsters are exploiting the spread of Coronavirus (Covid-19) to facilitate various types of online and telephone fraud.

An Garda Síochána have been made aware of fraudsters sending out coronavirus-themed phishing emails and texts in an attempt to trick people into opening malicious attachments or revealing sensitive personal and financial details.

They may purport to be from organisations associated with the prevention of Coronavirus (Covid-19) and contact potential victims via email or text. They may claim to have information which supposedly affects the intended victim. In order to access this “information” the victim has to pay for it.

To be successful, these fraudsters require you to give up personal information either through trickery or misdirection which they can use to gain access to your funds or sell on to other criminals.

What can you do to prevent online and telephone frauds?

- Wherever you access your online information, keep your software updated, including your browser, antivirus and operating system.
- Beware of unsolicited requests, especially if they are requesting sensitive information such as your online banking account password or credit or debit card PIN number.
- If it's a telephone request, take the caller's number and advise them that you will call them back. Look up the organisation's phone number and contact them directly. Do not use the number they give you.
- Don't share your credit or debit card PIN number or your online banking password. Your bank will never ask for such details.
- Fraudsters can find your basic information online (e.g. social media). Don't assume a caller is genuine just because they have such details.
- Don't transfer money to another account on their request.
- Look at emails closely: compare the address with previous real messages and check for bad spelling and grammar.
- Don't reply to suspicious emails or texts.
- Don't click on their links or download their attachments.
- When in doubt, double check the website or give the company a call.

- Don't be rushed. Take your time and make the appropriate checks before responding.
- If you think you might have responded to a fraudulent email, text or call and provided your bank details, contact your bank immediately.

If you have been a victim of a crime report it to your local Garda Station via telephone at this time.

: Crime Prevention Advice on Vacant Retail Premises

Many businesses have had to close their premises to prevent the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19). An Garda Síochána and the Irish Security Industry Association give the following advice to keep retail premises secure at this time:

- Ensure all entrance points to the building are protected with the best security solution, locks and bolts. If there are roller shutters, ancillary locking devices such as Shutter Locking Ram posts or Ground Locks should be used.
- We would advise the removal and banking of cash from premises for businesses closing for extended periods. If you are keeping cash on site ensure your cash-safe is insurance rated for the appropriate amount.
- Limit the amount of cash stored on the premises or in ATM's.
- Consideration should be given to building a strong room/ Cash Office, where the safe, intruder panel & CCTV Recorder should be located.
- Use lighting to draw attention and deter criminals from approaching entrances.
- Routinely check the perimeter of your premises and inform Gardaí by telephone if you notice anything suspicious.
- To allow for an appropriate response to a breach of security ensure that your alarm system is monitored by an Alarm Receiving Centre.
- Periodically test your premises alarm system with your Alarm Receiving Centre.
- You must only employ the services of a Private Security Authority (PSA) licenced alarm company to install and maintain electronic security systems, ensuring that the intruder alarm system is serviced at least twice a year.
- Dual path intruder alarm signalling should be employed and connected to an Alarm Receiving Centre via, IP, GSM (Grade 3 or 4) or Radio backup.

- Ensure that your alarm has adequate coverage, particularly in voids above ceilings, where Point to Point beams may be employed.
- Vulnerable areas such as Cash Offices and where the intruder panel is located should have secondary devices to ensure a verified alarm is received by the monitoring centre.
- If possible, install CCTV cameras which can be remotely monitored by an Alarm Receiving Centre and allow for the appropriate response should an incident occur.
- Leave tills empty and open when not in use.
- If CCTV is in use, ensure that signage is in place and complies with the requirements of GDPR.
- Look for Garda assistance when attending to an alarm and consider employing the services of a Professional, Licensed Key-Holding Company.

If you are a business that is trading during this time, ensure HSE guidelines on social distancing are being adhered to. Ensure staff are keeping to agreed till limits and that you have effective cash management in place, with trusted staff lodging cash regularly. The Retail Security Guide is available for download on the Garda website www.garda.ie

Coronavirus (COVID

-19): Crime Prevention Advice on Vacant Houses

As our country responds to the threat of Coronavirus (COVID-19) some homes may become vacant should sole owner/ occupiers become hospitalised. Whilst adhering to current HSE advice on social distancing, where possible family, friends or neighbours should:

- Conduct frequent checks of the property at different times of the day to note any signs of trespassing or interference.
- Ensure the burglar alarm is set and working.
- Secure all doors and windows with deadbolt locks.
- Install timers on internal lights and motion detectors on external lights to make the house appear occupied and offer natural surveillance of the property.
- Ensure that the building doesn't look neglected. Cut the grass and hedges regularly.
- Remove rubbish from inside the building and around the perimeter.
- Report any suspicious activity by telephone to local Gardaí.
- Inform the local Garda station about the premises being vacant to afford passing attention on patrols.
- Put measures in place to protect empty buildings against arson, theft and vandalism.
- Avoid the build-up of post and unsolicited mail by arranging 'mail minder' service with An Post to retain post for collection and place a 'No Junk Mail' sign on letter-box.

Landlords and Owners of Vacant Property should:

- Keep a check on their vacant residences and know what property they have. Many scrap metal related crimes are difficult to solve because people are often unable to narrow down a time-frame when the crime actually occurred.
- Don't leave items, such as ladders and tools, unsecured around the residence. Keep property secured and out of sight from opportunist thieves.
- Use security lighting around your residence and storage buildings and ensure shrubs do not obscure light fixtures.
- Consider installing fencing or security bars around heating and air conditioning units to prevent theft and damage to these items.
- If you have vacant residences, keep them secured and check them frequently for any signs of tampering. Ask neighbours to call Gardaí if they see anyone suspicious on the property.
- Record serial numbers, or apply your own numbers to items that could be stolen from your residence. If there are no serial numbers, apply your own number to these items and keep them. Photograph items around your residence that could be targets for potential thieves. This can be of tremendous assistance to Gardaí investigating these cases.
- Don't leave vehicles unlocked. Automotive batteries are potential targets for scrap metal thieves. Catalytic converters are easily stolen from vehicles; park vehicles in well-lit areas and keep a check on them.
- If you see suspicious individuals or vehicles in your neighbourhood, call the Gardaí and try to get registration numbers and descriptions.