

PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release

Avoid counterfeit goods – only criminals benefit.

Trading Standards services throughout Scotland are reporting that the trade in fake goods continues to be a serious problem. Today, as part of Scottish Trading Standards Week, officers across Scotland are highlighting to consumers why it is not a good idea to buy counterfeit goods and how anyone caught trading in them risks being caught and punished.

Internationally, the trade in counterfeit and pirated goods has risen in the last few years and is estimated to now count for over 3% of international trade. Counterfeit products can be found in many forms, including designer clothing, trainers, perfume, jewellery, computer software and games. Whisky, electrical goods, car and airplane parts, tyres, razor blades, cigarettes and children's toys are also copied, many causing serious safety issues.

Consumers may think they are getting a bargain but it is more likely that they would risk wasting their cash as goods are often of poor quality and can be dangerous. It is also well-established that the trade in pirated and fake goods supports serious crime such as drug dealing, human trafficking and prostitution. In addition, those who trade in fakes pay no taxes, could be illegally claiming benefits and the illegal trade puts genuine local traders who play by the rules out of business. In the UK this illicit trade is believed to cost the economy over £9 billion in lost revenue, almost 60,000 jobs and £4 billion in unpaid tax.

Officers have reported a growing market in sales on social media platforms such as Facebook and online marketplaces including Gumtree. Once the traders are identified, following consumer complaints or routine monitoring by officers, powers to shut down online operations can be used to disrupt these activities. However, Electrical Safety First has reported that 30% of consumers buy electrical fakes including electric hair dryers and straighteners from online marketplaces. ESF also report that 98% of counterfeit phone chargers tested were extremely dangerous.

Year-on-year, tobacco products remain the most counterfeited goods investigated by Trading Standards Officers. As fake cigarettes are not subject to any regulations, they often contain excessive levels of tar and nicotine, and do not extinguish on their own, presenting an increased fire and health risk to smokers. The second most reported crime is the trade in counterfeit clothing. Scottish authorities have been at the forefront of many major investigations which will typically cross not only local authority borders but can be international in scope. This year, Highland Council received an award from the UK Anti-Counterfeiting Group after they secured an enforcement order against a seller regularly transporting large amounts of fake designer goods from Turkey. And an officer from North Lanarkshire was commended following the development of a joint initiative to tackle the trade in fake goods with South Lanarkshire Trading Standard Service and Police Scotland.

SCOTSS Chair and Trading Standards Manager for Dumfries & Galloway Council, Sandra Harkness said:

“Intellectual Property Crime including the trade in counterfeit products is a deeply disturbing crime that affects us all and seriously damages the economy. Trading Standards services in Scotland do all they can to tackle this issue alongside partners such as Police Scotland, brand holders and anti-counterfeiting specialists. It’s not a victimless crime by any means and we will take tough action when we find it.”

George Clyde, Chair of The Scottish Anti Illicit Trade Group added

“The Scottish Anti Illicit Trade group including the Anti-Counterfeiting Group recognise the importance of partnership working with local Trading Standards. They make up an integral part of safer communities working with not only other enforcement agencies but also in their role in protecting and educating the public. They have a vast role to play in so many varying areas such as anti-counterfeiting, weights and measures and under-age supplies of products.”

Scottish Trading Standards Week 16-20 September 2019 is run by SCOTSS, the Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland. A YouTube video providing information on the impact of the trade in counterfeit goods on consumers and legitimate traders has also been released with the kind permission of colleagues in London trading Standards <https://youtu.be/wfzGhAqsS40>

Follow @socotss on Twitter for full updates and follow #ScottishTSweek2019 for updates from across Scotland.

www.tradingstandards.scot

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Notes for Editors:

For press queries, email coordinator@scotss.org.uk

1. The Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland (SCOTSS) represents the 31 local authority Trading Standards services in Scotland. SCOTSS was established in 1996 and helps support and coordinate the activities of Scotland local authority trading standards teams. It is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC047951 and works closely with other governmental and regulatory organisations, such as the Competition & Markets Authority, and

2. Trading Standards Officers in Scottish councils advise on and enforce laws that govern the way we buy, sell, rent and hire goods and services. Local authorities carry out inspections and monitor or investigate complaints, they work with businesses to help achieve compliance but ultimately, can instigate prosecutions against those who break the law.

3. Fair Trading and anti-counterfeiting awareness raising events are being run at three locations across Scotland and all are welcome to visit on Thursday 19th September. Take the opportunity to find out the dangers of counterfeit goods from Trading Standards officers and learn about the range of goods that are counterfeited and the consequences of using or buying them:

1. Inverness – Eastgate Shopping Centre from 11am – 3pm
2. Clydebank - Golden Jubilee National Hospital from 11am – 2pm
3. Glasgow – Queen Elizabeth University Hospital from 10.30 to 3.30 with a visit from Dixie the Tobacco Detection from 2pm

4. Anyone with information about traders or individuals selling fake goods, either from shops or market stalls or online, can report it anonymously through Advice Direct Scotland on 0808 164 6000 www.consumeradvice.scot or to their local Trading Standards authority <https://www.tradingstandards.uk/consumers/support-advice>