

Warning to residents after series of delivery scams

Police are warning residents to stay vigilant following reports of people receiving unexpected packages from couriers, over the last week.

Victims have received packages that were addressed to them but contained items that they had not ordered. A short while later a woman wearing a DPD courier uniform has arrived to collect the packages, claiming they had been delivered to the wrong address. In the reported instances the packages have contained either iPhones or laptops and have been despatched by AO.

We want all residents to be aware of this potential fraud. If goods are delivered that you have not ordered and are marked with your address you should inform the company that sent it and wait for them to send a courier. Always check with them which courier company is making the collection and when they will arrive. If someone knocks on the door claiming to have come to pick it up after it was delivered by mistake, think twice about handing it over. Are they from the same company that just delivered it? Can you see a company vehicle? Just because they are in a uniform does not mean they are from the company as they claim.

“If someone tries to deliver a parcel you have not ordered, refuse to accept it so that it goes back to the depot or the sender. If you have handed a parcel over, please report it to Action Fraud. If someone is at your door claiming to have come to pick up a parcel you never ordered ring 999.”

Crime prevention advice:

- If possible, do not accept or sign for parcels you haven't ordered.
- If a parcel you have received is not something you have ordered, you should not hand the parcel over to someone calling at your door unless you have made a prior arrangement for its collection and you are able to check the identity of the caller.
- If you realise a parcel you have received is something you have not ordered, you should immediately contact the company to arrange for its collection. Remember to ask how to ensure the identity of the person collecting it.
- If you have already handed over a package in the circumstances described contact Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or via www.actionfraud.police.uk.

Brushing scams explained

- At first glance, receiving packages you have not paid for might seem like a great problem to have. But it's likely to be a new scam known as 'brushing'.
- This type of fraud involves Amazon sellers setting up accounts in a stranger's name, then sending their products to an unsuspecting recipient.
- They then use this account they've set up to write fake 'verified reviews' in a bid to improve their seller ratings.
- In this case, it is likely that the member's name and address had been leaked somewhere. We contacted Amazon and it assured us that the member's genuine account had not been compromised.
- With the member's permission, we also checked their email address on haveibeenpwned.com, a website that tells you whether your data has been part of a breach. In this case, the data had been involved in at least four.

What to do if you are a victim of 'brushing'

- It is always good to be cautious where personal data is concerned, so the member was right to report the incident to Amazon, change their password and order a new credit card.
- **See all our Consumer Rights scams advice**
- Identity theft is a serious threat as once a criminal has access to your personal information, they can do everything from open an account in your name and run up debt, or use it to get copies of your official documents.
- You can read more on what identity theft is and what to do if you think your information has been compromised in our guide.
- Have you had free packages turn up in your name? If so, what did you do? Would you report them or keep them?

If you are asked to sign for a package and are in any doubt as to what it is for, consider opening and verifying it before signing for the item.

Can you keep it?

According to Citizens' Advice, if an item is addressed to you, there has been no previous contact with the company, and it arrives out of the blue, then you can keep it.

However anything which arrives by mistake - either delivered to the wrong address, or a duplicate of some goods you have already received - has to go back.

What to do if you think your part of a brushing scam

If you suddenly received deliveries of parcels from Amazon that you didn't order or pay for, changing your Amazon password and cancelling the card linked to the account is a good first step. Identity theft is a serious threat - once a scammer has access to your personal information, they can wreck extreme havoc, including leaving you in major debt.

You should also report these parcels to Amazon as well, so the company can investigate what is going on.