

**March 2013**

## Consumer Alerts

### Unsolicited Emails

One consumer received an email allegedly from the FBI stating they had met with a Nigerian Bank and that the consumer could claim \$2.5 million (US dollars). The email asks for a payment of \$198 by card.

Another email asks consumers to respond to the sender to get funds transferred to their Visa Card.

Another email circulating seems to come from a friend and asks for help as they are stuck in another country. The consumer is then asked to pay £800 into a foreign bank account. It later transpired that the email account had been hacked and the friend was safe and well at home.

Trading Standards advice is never reply to unsolicited emails.

### Doorstep Incidents

There have been further reports of a man selling mattresses out of the back of a white van. Sometimes the trader approaches people in the street and at other times he calls door to door. Trading Standards advice is never buy this type of furniture from someone selling door to door as it may not comply with current safety standards.

There have been a number of reports this month of bogus traders offering to do roofing work. Any work done is much overpriced and of poor quality. In one incident an elderly man was charged £5600 which he had to pay up front. Once the

trader started work he kept finding more problems and asking for more money.

Trading Standards advice is never deal with traders who cold call. If you want help finding a reputable trader visit our Safe Trader Scheme website [www.safetrader.org.uk](http://www.safetrader.org.uk) or contact Help Direct on 0303 333 1111.

### Unsolicited Telephone Calls

A number of consumers have reported being cold called by a trader who says they are paying too much council tax. The trader says he has been "appointed" to deal with changes to council tax banding and the consumer is likely to receive a rebate of £2000. The trader then tries to make an appointment to visit the consumer at home.

Trading Standards advice is if you choose to employ someone to handle a council tax appeal for you, be aware that you are likely to be charged a fee for any work carried out, even if this only involves giving advice and information. Please make sure you fully understand the terms of any contract before you sign it.

For more information about council tax rebates visit the Valuation Office Agency website [www.voa.gov.uk](http://www.voa.gov.uk) or speak to your local valuation office agency. There is no charge for this service.

**Contact the Trading Standards Service via the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 08454 04 05 06**