Computer Support Warning

Trading Standards Officers in Staffordshire are warning Internet users to be wary of unsolicited telephone calls concerning fictitious computer issues.

Their warning follows a complaint from a Staffordshire resident who was telephoned by someone claiming to work for an online computer technical support website called www.supportonclick.co.uk. The caller claimed that her computer was infected with a virus and asked for personal details, including credit card information, in an aggressive and persistent sale pitch aimed at convincing her to buy security software and technical support. The caller used scare tactics, telling her that her PC would be damaged beyond repair unless she signed up within 15 minutes.

Her PC, in fact, had nothing wrong with it, and the attempts by the Indian-based company to sell their services were completely fraudulent. The resident had not logged any computer issues with anyone, and it appears that she was targeted at random. Internet research into the company has revealed that complaints of this type are widespread. Some reports claim that callers purport to be calling from Microsoft. Officers are urging computer users to be vigilant.

Officers advise that effective online security is crucial, and users should ensure that their PCs are running up-to-date anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software. However, good security need not be complicated or expensive – many security vendors provide free versions of their software for personal use.

Officers advise PC users to read up on online security via www.getsafeonline.org. They also advise turning off any 'auto-preview' features in their email software, and encourage all email users to observe their tips for avoiding email spam (Avoiding Spam).

All our alerts are available in a range of formats and languages, including large print. Please contact Nicola Wilson if this would be helpful to you, or to someone you know.

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