



SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS

LOCAL POLICE, LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Jan Lovell, of the East Finchley Safer Neighbourhood policing team, updates us on the latest crime prevention news. Email the team: EastFinchley.snt@met.police.uk or telephone 020 7161 9014. Below are two different accounts of bogus callers posing as workmen dealing with water leaks. These are real accounts from folk who live in East Finchley. Both were surprised at being taken in, at least in part, by these men, who use various tactics to confuse a person into giving them access to a house or money. Please read them and stay alert to similar scams.

My wife didn't like his pushiness

I was walking along the street near my home this morning when a man in a car spoke to me. He said he was working in the house next door where there was a problem with a severe water leak. He said he'd seen me leaving my house and asked for my phone number so a surveyor dealing with the party wall could get in contact.

I gave him my landline but no address, and apparently the 'surveyor' then immediately phoned my wife from a withheld number. He very forcefully wanted to come round and be given access or serve some papers on us. Fortunately, she didn't like his pushiness and told him to call again after the time I'd said I'd be back. At no time did either of them mention what address they were talking about.

When I got back we phoned our neighbour and he confirmed there was nobody working there and it must be a scam. Nobody has called back.

We don't think we are easily taken in but the scam was semi-plausible and fortunately my wife deterred them. When asked, the caller told her his name was Peter Radcliffe and he was a Chartered Surveyor who worked for All Damp UK Ltd. It makes us wonder what they might have done if they had come round and she had opened the door!

A sense of panic

Last Friday afternoon I was the victim of an attempted scam. My doorbell rang and a late middle-aged man, rather overweight, claimed that he and his colleagues had just repaired a serious water leak in the flat above mine, and he wanted to check if any water had come down into my flat.

I allowed him into my kitchen and he suggested that I look at the ceiling in the adjoining room, which is the lounge. After a couple of minutes he called me into the kitchen to show me water

on my ceiling, running down the walls and on my worktop. He said that they had left de-humidifiers in the flat above, that it would be advisable for me to have one in my kitchen to assist the drying-out process and that there was a distinct possibility that my ceiling would collapse. If I gave him my telephone number, his boss would call to discuss the use of the de-humidifier.

He left and I began mopping up the water. Within a couple of minutes the phone rang and a man claiming to be his boss said that it was necessary to hire the de-humidifier and I'd have to pay £4,800 as a deposit. I balked at this and after quite a long discussion about alternatives, he said he'd ask someone from the hire company to call and explain.

Sure enough, a couple of minutes later someone with an Irish accent phoned and further discussion ensued. Finally I asked for bank details so that if the managing agents of my flat authorised me to pay (I knew they wouldn't) I'd know to whom to transfer the money. He said he didn't have the details to hand and would have to phone me back.

Needless to say, because he knew I was very suspicious he did not phone back. I mopped up the water and it was soon apparent that it was not from the flat above but had been splashed about from my kitchen.

During the conversations I was told that the flat above was empty but I was fairly sure that this was not true. When I knocked the resident there was adamant that there had been no leak and no one had been working there on Friday.

In the cold light of day this all sounds unbelievable. There were so many inconsistencies and pieces of information that could be easily shown to be false. However when people feel a sense of panic, which I did momentarily, they can be tricked into a course of action that they would not normally even consider.

Second break-in at High Road store

The 3R Express Mart at 24 High Road was broken into at around 4.30am on Saturday 14 January. The thieves managed to move the shop front's protective metal shutters in order to gain access through the door. As in a previous robbery a year ago, they made off with a haul of cigarettes.

Right: The mess left by burglars at 3R Express Mart. Photo Mike Coles



Arson in the park

When the present kiosk in Cherry Tree Wood was put up it was said to be vandal proof. This would appear to be true regarding the actual building. Sadly, the fenced off storage area behind it where a fridge, some pieces of plastic furniture and the like were kept could not offer the same protection. Around the new year, vandals managed to set fire to what was there, leaving a nasty mess (pictured, left) for someone else to clear up.

Shop help

The Sue Ryder charity shop in Muswell Hill Broadway, N10, is desperately seeking volunteers. Drop in if you can offer a few hours of your time to help.

Crime spot to be fenced off

An embankment alongside the North Circular is to be fenced off in an attempt to deter antisocial behaviour.

Transport for London has confirmed that the 20m wooden fence will be erected around the sloped land it owns where the North Circular crosses Long Lane, which in the past has been a location for drug dealing and flytipping.

East Finchley's councillors said they had been trying to get the fence for years and hoped it signalled the end of criminal activity there. Councillor Alison Moore said: "This small scrap of land has been a real nuisance to neighbours, but it could be a valuable little green space."

The cost of the project is estimated at £2,000 and installation work was due to start by the end of January.

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