NIFC COMMUNITY AWARENESS UPDATE

NIFC COMMUNITY AWARENESS UPDATE 5/24 (10 May 24)

(The Community Awareness Update provides general information to enable personnel to keep up-to-date with routine correspondence; it is not provided for mission-related items and does not replace the Emergency Messaging System.)

WELCOME TO ALL OUR NEW 'FAMILY' MEMBERS; THE COMMUNITY AWARENESS UPDATE IS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE YOU WITH, HOPEFULLY, INFORMATIVE AND USEFUL INFORMATION.

CONTENT:

LATEST SCAMS DOING THE ROUNDS:

Sky maintenance call:

- Recipients of this 'Sky Maintenance' call report that you're asked if you'd like to renew or cancel your contract with Sky or that an insurance payment for your Sky equipment is due.
- In some calls, recipients have been offered a discount on their Sky services or threatened with a fine for not answering the caller's questions.
- The caller also asks for your account details; giving this information away is likely to result in another scam attempt.

HMRC scam call:

- Will scammers ever stop impersonating HMRC? Probably not.
- These calls are a recorded message telling you that legal action (or a 'lawsuit') is being taken against you and to press one on your keypad to speak to someone or make a payment.
- Some recorded messages also threaten you with being arrested for unpaid tax.
- These out-of-the-blue calls can be quite concerning and may encourage you to act fast.
- If you receive a call impersonating HMRC, you can report it to HMRC using its online form.
- You'll be asked to sign in using your Government Gateway user ID or your email address.

Telephone Preference Service scam:

- A call from scammers impersonating the telephone preference service (TPS) tells you that you need to reactivate your registration with the service to 'protect you from scammers'.
- The TPS is a free service which stops unsolicited sales and marketing calls and you can register online. The scam caller also asks for your bank details to complete the registration.

Passport scam call:

- Fraudsters have been calling potential victims and leaving recorded messages that claim there's a problem with your passport or visa application and to press one to speak to someone.

- The official passport advice line is 0300 222 0000. You can also track your passport application process online.

Moonpay scam:
- Scammers have been contacting people over the phone and via social media, claiming to be a cryptocurrency company called Moonpay.
- These callers try to scam you by offering returns on your trades and special promotions.
- The genuine Moonpay has stated that it will never contact you offering trading returns via phone, text message or through other media.

Avoiding phone scams:
- You could consider installing a call blocker to avoid spam and scam calls.
- You should also be aware that fraudsters can keep your phone line open after you've hung up on a scam call. So, if you want to call the genuine company on a legitimate number, use a different phone or wait for at least 10 to 15 minutes before you make a call.
- For bank impersonation scams, you can Call 159 and you'll be put through to your bank's genuine customer service line.

Reporting phone scams:
- To report a scam call you can text the word 'call' followed by the phone number to 7726.
- On WhatsApp, open the WhatsApp chat with the dodgy phone number and tap 'block.' You can report the contact by tapping 'report contact' and 'block'.
- If you become the victim of a scam, call your bank immediately using the number on the back of your bank card and report it to Action Fraud or call the police on 101 if you're in Scotland.

WHICH? TOP TIP:

Scammers are using fake Windows Defender pop-up messages to convince PC users to hand over hundreds of pounds. In reality, however, these warnings are completely false and have nothing to do with Microsoft. They are caused by trojan malware that can delete, block, modify, leak or copy data. But your device isn't affected by this trojan – it's simply a window trying to convince you to call the number on-screen.

We have used the Which? Top Tip to explain how to remove these pop-ups for good.

- 'I've had a Windows Defender pop-up message appear on my laptop that I can't get rid of – it's taken over my screen and is telling me my device is under threat from a detected Trojan program and I need to contact Microsoft. What should I do?'

Which? Tech Support expert says:

- 'This is a well-known scam that we regularly get contacted about – it has nothing to do with Microsoft, is extremely annoying and very convincing.
- The message can take over your entire screen, so you can see why some people feel obliged to call the on-screen number. The call usually revolves around the scammer convincing you that your machine

is 'infected' and a payment (typically a few hundred pounds) by bank transfer or gift cards will resolve the issue. The scammers are usually very persistent.

- Don't call the number, though, as there's an easy fix. Just follow the steps below.'

How to protect your PC:

- Press **Ctrl + Alt + Del** on your keyboard and select **Task Manager**. From here, you can close your web browser (whichever one you use to access websites; Chrome or Firefox, for example). To close it, **right-click your browser** and select **End task**.
- Next, you need to disable your browser notifications in both your computer's settings and the browser itself. (shown below) Click the **Start Menu** or press the **Windows key** on your keyboard > **Settings** > (on Windows 11, also select **System**) **Notifications & Actions** and toggle your browser to **Off**.
- Open your browser again and go to its settings – from here, you need to look for privacy and security, and then notifications (this will differ, depending on your browser – use a search engine to help you if you can't find it). For example, in Chrome, you select the **top right icon showing three dots** > **Settings** > **Privacy and security** > **Site settings**.
- Scroll down, select **Pop-ups and redirects**, then select **Don't allow sites to send pop-ups or use redirects**.
- There are no residual effects once the page is closed and notifications are turned off – your computer will not be infected in any way.

WHATSAPP GROUP CHAT MEMBERS:

WhatsApp group chat members are being warned they could be targeted by criminals, as Action Fraud revealed it has received 636 reports from victims of the messaging app this year.

- The fraud often begins when a member of the group receives a WhatsApp audio call from the fraudster, pretending or claiming to be another member of the group. This is done to gain the individual's trust, and often the scammer will use a false profile picture and/or display name, so at first glance it would appear to be a genuine member of the group.

- The fraudster will tell the victim they are sending them a one-time passcode which will allow them to join an upcoming video call for group members. The criminal then asks the victim to share this passcode with them so they can be "registered" for the video call.

- In reality, the criminal is asking for a registration code to register the victim's WhatsApp account to a new device so they can take over their account.

- Once the fraudster has access to the victim's WhatsApp account, they will enable two-step verification which makes it impossible for the victim to regain access their account. Other members of the group, or friends and family in the victim's contacts, will then be messaged asking them to transfer money urgently as they are in desperate need of help.

How to secure your WhatsApp account:

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- **Set up two-step verification (2SV)** to give an extra layer of protection to your account. Tap Settings > Account > Two-step verification > Enable.

- **CALL.** If a family member or friend makes an unusual request on WhatsApp, always call the person outside of WhatsApp to confirm their identity.

- **Report spam messages or block a sender within WhatsApp.** Press and hold on the message bubble, select 'Report' and then follow the instructions.

If you live in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and have been a victim of fraud or cybercrime, report it at www.actionfraud.police.uk or by calling 0300 123 2040. In Scotland, victims of fraud and cybercrime should report to Police Scotland on 101.

Find out how to protect yourself from fraud: https://stopthinkfraud.campaign.gov.uk

SPRING/SUMMER SAFETY ADVICE:

Lighter evenings, warmer weather, BBQs/Pizza Ovens cleaned and ready, Eurovision parties, Olympics on the horizon – everything is starting to gear up for activities criminals have been waiting for – unsecure properties, V&A items left outside, etc., but don't let them spoil you having a safe and enjoyable summer.

Whether you're seeking advice on how to address anti-social behaviour or looking for practical tips to secure your home or caravan, we've taken some advice from the Civil Police.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB):

What is anti-social behaviour?

- Anti-social behaviour (ASB) encompasses various forms of disruptive conduct, including:
  - Excessive noise
  - Graffiti
  - Littering
  - Neighbour disputes

- While these behaviour may not be classified as criminal offences, they can significantly impact the quality of life for individuals and communities. If you encounter any instances of anti-social behaviour, it is crucial to report them promptly to prevent the situation from escalating.

Who deals with anti-social behaviour?

- Local councils, the Housing Executive, housing associations, private landlords and police are responsible for dealing with different types of anti-social behaviour.

What type of anti-social behaviour should I report to police?

- Some anti-social behaviour is criminal activity. You should report:
  - Motoring offences

Is it an emergency? Call 999

If it is not life threatening: Call 101 for the Civil Police; Call 111 for the NHS.

If you want to report a concern anonymously, you can report it via the Crimestoppers website or via their hotline on: 0800 555 111.

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- Drunken and rowdy behaviour in a public place
- Criminal damage
- Assaults
- Theft
- Intimidation
- Harassment
- Drug use or drug dealing
- Hate crime

Report anti-social behaviour:

- If you spot something that you think is suspicious, or you are concerned about anti-social behaviour in your area, please report it to 101 or dial 999 if it is an emergency.
- Alternatively, you can also use Civil Police online reporting to report to report non-emergency incidents.

Home Security:

- A significant number of burglars are opportunistic individuals who take advantage of the lack of security measures in place, such as open or unlocked doors and windows, removing the need for forced entry.
- Even if you are not heading away this summer, it is still important to remember to secure your home when you are outside enjoying the sunshine.
- To deter thieves, here are some tips on how to protect your home:
    - Always ensure your windows and doors are locked
    - Mark valuable items in your home with your postcode and house number
    - Don't keep large amounts of cash in your home
    - Leave a front room or bedroom light on if it will be dark before you get home
    - Consider installing a home security system
    - Consider security lights - to a burglar a dark house is an empty house
    - Lock garages and sheds
    - Give your property an occupied look by using timer switches for lights when your home is empty
    - Always keep sheds and outbuilding locked and secure ladders

- It only takes a thief a few minutes to enter your home and take valuables so ensure to secure your house, shed and any other outbuildings.

Car Security:

- Car thieves can strike at any time and it only takes them a few seconds to steal your vehicle and, or your belongings. Here are some simple steps you can take to prevent the worst from happening:
    - Don't leave items on display. Mobile phones, electronic equipment, money, sunglasses, tools, clothing and bags should be removed from the car or placed in the boot.
    - When not in use, either at home or out and about, store your vehicle keys and fobs in a RFID security pouch. Keep these out of sight and reach.

    - Always lock and close the windows of your vehicle when unattended.
    - Always listen out for the sound of your doors locking, lights flashing and mirrors closing. If you don't hear or see this, be sure to double check.
    - If you have a garage, use it and lock it. Think about using an alarm for your garage and gates.

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- Motorists are also advised to use a blocking pouch also called a Faraday pouch (lined with metallic material) to help block the wireless signal from your key fob.

DRIVING LAWS YOU (PROBABLY) DIDN'T KNOW EXISTED:

From blaring music, splashing pedestrians and wearing sandals, these things could land you in trouble. Whether you've recently passed your test or got your licence years ago, you'll know there are plenty of rules that make up the Highway Code.

Things such as wearing a seatbelt and not going through a red light are etched into our memories from our driving lessons, but other more obscure rules may not be quite as memorable.

Here are some of the driving laws in the UK and across Europe that you may have forgotten or not be aware of.

Splashing pedestrians:

- In the UK, rainy days are sadly all too familiar, and this leads to puddles forming on our roads.
- It may surprise some people, but splashing a pedestrian and leaving them soaking wet – maliciously or not – is an offence.
- And although avoiding puddles can be tricky, under section three of the Road Traffic Act 1988, splashing a passer-by with your car amounts to careless and inconsiderate driving.
- If caught by the police, you can expect to receive at least a £100 fine and three penalty points on your licence. The maximum fine is £5,000.

Test your brakes after driving through water:

- On the topic of wet conditions, rule 121 of the Highway Code says that drivers should test their brakes after driving through puddles or standing water.
- In fact, water can hinder the effectiveness of your brakes, so it's always worth checking that they're working properly.
- If they're not, apply light pressure to the pedal as you drive slowly to dry out your brakes.

Swearing and rude gestures:

- According to the RAC, 43% of UK motorists have been the victim of road rage, with female drivers experiencing more incidents than males.
- Angry drivers can create a dangerous, unsafe environment for everyone, so it's no wonder there are fines in place to deter road rage.
- Motorists who curse, swear or make rude gestures to fellow drivers can be sanctioned for disorderly conduct, landing a penalty of £1,000 and three points.

Warning other motorists about speed cameras:

- Being a good Samaritan doesn't always pay off. Warning other motorists about speed traps ahead can get you in the same situation you're helping them avoid – a pricey fine.
- By flashing your lights at fellow drivers to inform them about speed traps, you're obstructing a police officer in their duty, which could cost you up to £1,000.

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Pets and breakdowns:

- If you're taking your pet for a ride, there are a few regulations you need to keep in mind.
- For example, rule 57 of the Highway Code says that when in a vehicle, dogs and other animals have to be restrained to avoid distracting the driver and causing potential injuries.
- A lesser-known law is that in the event of a car breakdown, pets can't exit the vehicle with their owners.
- Instead, drivers must leave their animals in the vehicle or, in an emergency, keep them on the verge on a short lead. If you don't comply with this rule, you could face a penalty of up to £2,000.

Choice of shoe:

- Rule 97 of the Highway Code points out that when at the wheel, you should wear clothes and shoes that don't prevent you from correctly using the controls.
- Wearing footwear such as flip-flops, sandals, high heels and wellies might lead to a £100 on-the-spot fine and three points if the police feel you haven't conformed to Rule 97. If the case goes to court, the penalty may even rise to £5,000.
- Driving barefoot isn't illegal, but we'd always recommend having comfy shoes on your feet – for everybody's safety.

Loud music:

- Listening to music in your car can help you relax and make the trip more enjoyable. But turning the radio up to an excessive volume can put you at risk of hefty fines.
- According to the Road Vehicles Regulations 1986, loud music can cause distractions to you and fellow drivers.
- Not only that, but it can also prevent you and others from hearing emergency vehicles' sirens.

Driving laws across Europe:

If you have an upcoming road trip around Europe, it's worth checking other countries' regulations.
Most driving laws will be similar to UK rules, but some can catch you off-guard.
Here are a few of the most obscure:

- **Carry spare glasses** – In Spain, France and Switzerland, anyone wearing glasses needs to have a spare pair in the car when driving. If you don't, you could be fined.

- **No sipping water** – If you're driving around Cyprus, you are banned from drinking water at the wheel. Likewise, you're not allowed to eat and snack on treats.

- **Reverse with hazard warning lights** – To keep roads in Slovenia safe, you're required by law to put your hazard warning lights on when reversing.

- **Have a breathalyser at hand** – As a driver, it's your responsibility in France to check your blood alcohol content, and you should always carry a breathalyser in your car.

- **Pack a fire extinguisher** – If you're travelling through Belgium, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, you need to have an extinguisher in your boot. Also, if pulled over in Estonia, you must have blocks of plastic or wood in your car. These must be put under your wheels to avoid your vehicle rolling backwards on a steep hill.

Wherever you are, whatever the situation….

If you see something, say something.
Stay Alert, Stay Alive!

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