

Police Warning That Burglars Are Using Upmarket Fish Vans To Check Out Wealthy Villages

Police are warning homeowners that burglars are using upmarket fish vans to check out wealthy villages. Criminals are posing as fishmongers selling door to door in affluent areas to target unsuspecting residents.

Incidents have been reported across the UK, with cases reported in Cumbria and Wales. **The latest areas to be hit are properties in the Cotswolds and Hertfordshire homes.**

In Hertford, criminals have been selling seafood door-to-door before returning later to steal property. Chief Inspector Gerry McDonald of Hertfordshire Police said: "We know that in other areas of the county people have been conned into buying fish well above the market rates, by door to door fish sellers. We are concerned that this maybe starting to happen in East Herts and are asking residents to be on their guard."

"Most mobile fish sellers have regular weekly rounds or pitches. These new vans are turning up at random locations and at random times. We are also concerned that these 'fish sellers' may also be checking out properties."

Claire Wood, 32, from Hertford, said her area was targeted and a burglary occurred later the same day. "I had some bloke knock on my door trying to sell me meat and fish before saying he would go back to his van and show me some products, she said. I said 'I'm not interested, I'm vegan' as I didn't trust him. An old lady was targeted later and had her home burgled."

Detectives believe there is a link between the burglaries and the 'fish tradesmen'. A spokesman for Herts police said: "We have had information passed on to us from local residents that there are new fish vans operating in the rural areas. These seem to be turning up at random locations and at random times and are selling door to door. We are warning residents to be on their guard and want to hear from anyone who has been pressurised into buying fish. We are also concerned that these 'fish sellers' may also be checking out properties."

In Gloucestershire, residents reported salesmen selling fish and wearing white coats looking into cars. She told the police after they had left that she noticed white chalk on her wall. A white chalk mark on walls is regarded as a 'sign' used by some criminals to identify a property as a potential target for burglars or thieves.

In Deeside, Wales, a similar scam has been reported where vulnerable people were scammed by cold-callers at their doors using high pressure sales techniques to encourage people to buy large quantities of poor quality fish where the source, catch method, preparation, storage and weights were unknown.

The salesmen were showing customers a small selection of fish, and when they agreed to buy some, they would go to their unrefrigerated van, returning with a large number of packed fish. Some offered to go into the house to put the fish into the freezer. The fish was then discovered to be mislabelled as more expensive varieties, underweight and close to the use-by date.

The areas targeted in this way also reported a rise in burglaries.

Chief Inspector McDonald added: If you come across people selling fish out of their van and believe that this is unusual please can you pass details onto us. We believe that burglars might be using this method to get around the villages. If you are worried about anyone selling door to door, don't open your door to them and contact the police for advice."