



Trading Standards BUSINESS MATTERS

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Up-to-date news for Businesses

Contraband Tobacco Products



The term “Contraband Tobacco Products” is used to describe both smuggled ‘duty free’ and counterfeit tobacco and cigarettes. Complaints and enquiries about both are increasingly common; we took action against two suppliers last year and expect to do even more over the coming months.

The level of tax on tobacco supplied in the UK is the highest in the European Union. Together with restrictions on advertising and smoke free legislation, the high tax level aims to discourage people from starting to smoke and provides an incentive for smokers to quit. Contraband products frustrate these goals and lines the pockets of criminal gangs around the world.

More than half of the cheap tobacco and cigarettes sold in the UK are fakes, often produced in squalid

conditions with poor quality raw materials and little concern for quality control or hygiene. Most of the complaints that we receive are from customers who noticed a strange smell or taste, which is hardly surprising considering these production conditions.

As well as risking their reputation, anyone selling contraband tobacco products could face a huge fine or even jail. Despite this, some shops are tempted by offers of cheap cigarettes from salesmen travelling from shop to shop in a white van or from

a ‘friend in the pub who bought them on holiday’. They leave the genuine products on display and sell the contraband to regular customers from a ‘stash’ under the counter.

Please don’t risk it. If anyone offers you cheap cigarettes or tobacco, refuse and let us know about it. The more information you can provide, the better the chance of Trading Standards catching them.



one of these is fake - can you tell which one

Traders Urged to

Box Clever



Reducing packaging makes good business sense these days. Consumers are becoming more concerned about environmental issues and making buying choices based on less environmental impact. So now is the time to look again at your business' packaging and make sure that it isn't excessive.

Just by making a few simple changes in the way your business handles its packaging, you can save money in the long run on procurement, handling and disposal costs.

The environmental impact is clear. It helps conserve natural resources and slows the depletion of valuable landfill space. It also reduces the pollution associated with the manufacture of products. In addition, reducing the amount of hazardous constituents in

goods can help to prevent potential management problems at landfill and incinerators when these items are discarded.

Businesses have a legal obligation to comply with The Packaging (Essential Requirements) Regulations 2003, which are concerned with environmental impacts from packaging and packaging waste. The Law states that packaging must be manufactured so that **"its volume and weight is limited to the minimum adequate amount to maintain the necessary level of safety, hygiene and acceptance of the packed product for the consumer"**.

For further free, help and guidance contact our Business Advice Line 0116 305 8000.





New laws for **commercial buildings**

Buildings are responsible for almost 50 per cent of the UK's energy consumption and carbon emissions - a higher percentage than road or air traffic!

From 6 April 2008 large commercial properties and all new homes need an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) when built, sold or rented.

By October 2008 all buildings will be affected by the changes in law.

It is the responsibility of the person selling or renting a building to give a valid EPC to the buyer or tenant.

The ratings, similar to those found on products such as fridges, are

standard so that the energy efficiency of one building can easily be compared with another building of a similar type.

Other measures to be introduced include:

Public buildings to display energy certificates from 1st October 2008

Inspections for air conditioning systems from January 2009

Further information is also available from the EPBD helpline on **0845 365 2468** or help@epbduk.infor

Can you rely on your **Business Terms?**

If you have terms and conditions in your consumer contracts, these terms must be fair. If they are not you may find you are in a costly dispute and you may not be able to rely on your terms and conditions.

So check your terms to make sure that they are fair, easy to read and you are using plain English. If you have any concerns or

need help in assessing the fairness of your contracts, Trading Standards can offer you free, expert advice on terms and conditions, which will assist you to write your own. Particularly important if you sell on the web where complex rules apply.

Remember, if you don't get it right first time your business could be out of pocket!

Small Businesses Suffer at the **Hands of Rogues**

The Government Department BERR (formerly Dti) recently reported on new research that suggested most small businesses believe their profits are harmed by the unscrupulous trading activities of others.

The study found that:

- 53% of small business leaders believe their profits are hit by the unfair sales practices of rivals;
- Of these, 1 in 10 estimate rogues are costing them more than a fifth of their revenue;
- A fifth of small business leaders admitted that they had worked in organisations that used such practices, with 12% actively encouraged to deploy unfair tactics to make a sale.

The newly implemented Consumer Protection Regulations will provide Trading Standards with greater opportunities to tackle a much wider range of unfair trading practices. Businesses will also benefit from the implementation of the Business Protection from Misleading Marketing Regulations which deal with business to business contracts.

Trading Standards would urge all businesses to report **any** unfair trading activity, confidentially and/or anonymously at www.ripofftipoff.net.

How to Contact Us

Business Advice

Confidential, free advice on all trading standards matters including help for you to solve your consumer complaints. We can also help you to access available Rural Business Grants

Telephone: (0116) 305 8000

Email: trading-standards@leics.gov.uk

www.leics.gov.uk/trading-standards

www.askcedric.org.uk