



**POLICE
SCOTLAND**

Keeping people safe

POILEAS ALBA

North East

CRIMEALERT

Keeping Communities in the North East Safe

MARCH 2025



Welcome to the March 2025 edition of North East Crime Alert.

Produced by the Police Scotland North East Division Crime Reduction Team it's aim is to provide advice on how to spot the latest frauds and scams as well as how to keep your home and business safe.

In this edition of North East Crime Alert:

Diving Into The Depths. The work of Police Scotland's Dive and Marine Unit.

Do you know what to do if you've been scammed? Follow our advice if the worst able should happen.

Tackling Rural Vehicle Theft. Police Scotland's new initiative to disrupt rural crime.

Livestock Worrying. With lambing underway dog owners are being urged to keep dogs under proper control.

Adult Protection. The North East Crime Reduction Team hit the road to provide advice regarding financial harm.

As well as a regular round-up of crime in the North East.



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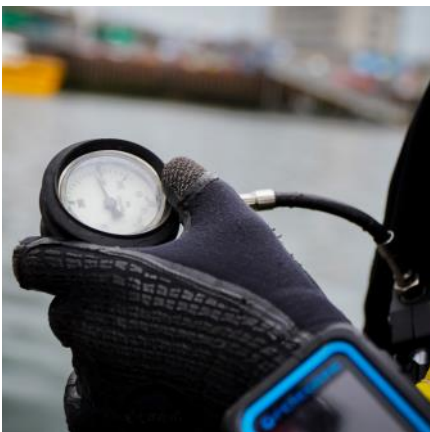
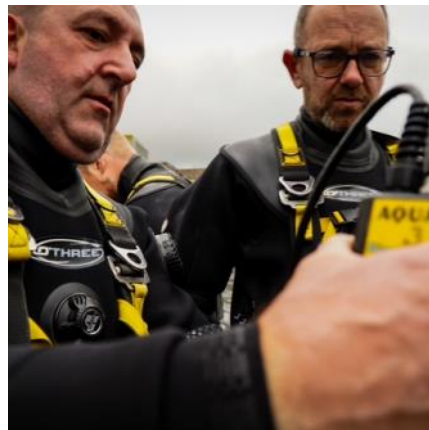
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Criminals are using ever more sophisticated methods. By staying better informed and working in partnership we can ensure our communities continue to be a safe place to live and work.

Diving into the Depths

Police Scotland's Dive and Marine Unit



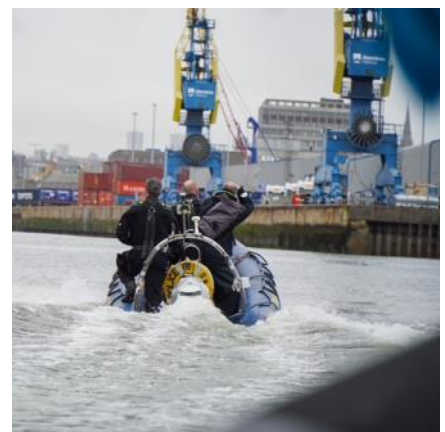
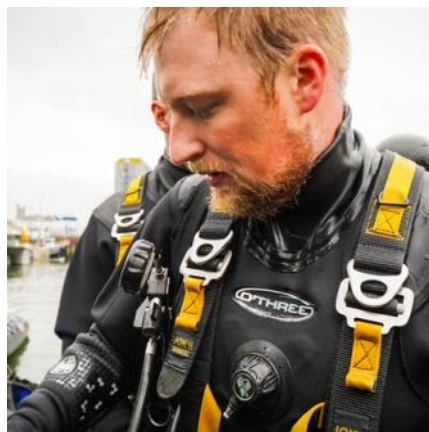
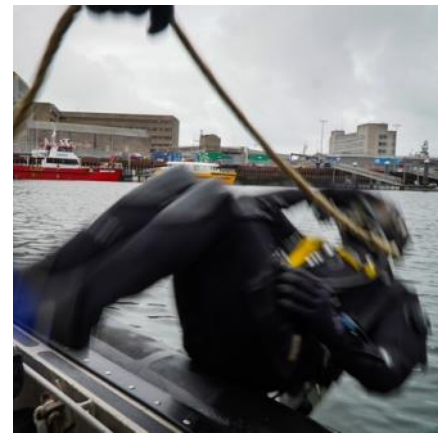
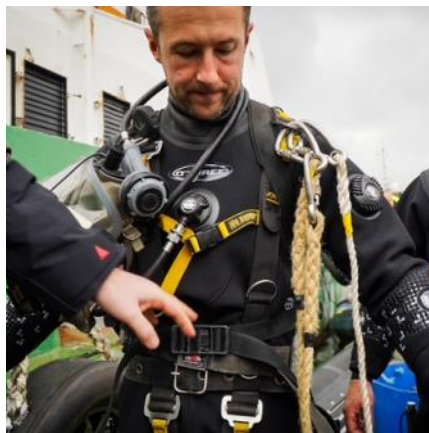


The depths of Scotland's lochs, rivers and coastal waters hold more than just secrets; they often become the focus of intense, specialised police work. Enter the Police Scotland Dive and Marine Unit, a team of highly trained officers who brave the often-treacherous underwater environment to recover evidence, locate missing persons and ensure public safety.

Born from the vision of William McGregor Smith, Chief Constable of Aberdeen City Police in 1964, the unit, then known as the Grampian Police Underwater Search Unit, began with just seven constables trained by Royal Navy divers. Over decades, this small group has evolved into a vital resource, playing a crucial role in countless investigations.

Today, the North unit, based at Bucksburn Police Station in Aberdeen, operates around the clock, 365 days a year. Their remit stretches across a vast swathe of Northern Scotland, from the former Tayside Police and Northern Constabulary regions, all the way to the remote islands of Orkney and Shetland. A sister unit operates in the West, based in Greenock.

'We're on call for any water-related incident,' explains a source within the unit. 'That can range from searching for missing persons and recovering stolen property to locating submerged vehicles and seizing illegal weapons or drugs.'



The unit's arsenal of tools reflects the challenging nature of their work. Beyond their core team of divers, they utilise cutting-edge technology, including a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) equipped with sonar and cameras and a RIB boat also fitted with side-scan sonar. Smaller Zodiac boats and even kayaks are employed when larger vessels can't access a location.

The divers are not just skilled swimmers; their training extends to confined space searching, swift water rescue, flood rescue and counter-terrorism techniques. They've been known to conduct security sweeps in sewers and meticulously examine the hulls of ships.

A minimum of five divers are required for any operation: the Supervisor, responsible for the dive and the site; the Diver and Diver's Attendant; and the Standby/Rescue Diver and Attendant. Safety is paramount. All operations adhere to strict Diving at Work regulations, limiting divers to a maximum depth of 50 meters.

They use compressed air, either via Self Contained Breathing Apparatus or Surface Demand Diving Equipment and maintain constant communication with the surface team through underwater or hard-wire systems. As a backup, they also employ lifeline signals – a series of tugs on the diver's tether – in case of communication failure.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of their work is the near-constant lack of visibility. 'Most dives are carried out in zero visibility,' the source explains. 'Divers often have to navigate by touch, following weighted ropes along the seabed or river bottom.'

Weekly training is crucial, exposing the team to diverse environments, from deep freshwater quarries and rivers to the unpredictable currents of the open sea and the precarious terrain of cliff faces. This rigorous preparation ensures that when the call comes, these unsung heroes are ready to dive into the depths, facing the unknown with skill, courage and a commitment to serving the public.

About this guide

Scams are crimes. They are tricks designed to mislead you into giving away your money, possessions or personal details.

Any of us can fall for a scam and they're a growing problem, so it's important to be aware of where you might encounter them. You can protect yourself against most scams with a few simple precautions and, if you've been the victim of a scam, there are places you can find help.

Scammers exploit uncertainty, like the COVID-19 pandemic, cost-of-living crisis or Brexit. They also take advantage of new rules, especially around pensions and TV licences. Be alert for new scams.

If you have been scammed, remember that it isn't your fault. Scams can be very sophisticated, and lots of people are tricked by them – you have nothing to be embarrassed about. You have been the victim of a crime.

In this guide, you'll find references to other free publications. You can order publications on 0319 6789, or by visiting publications.

1. Avoiding and spotting scams

One of the best ways to protect yourself is to know what a scam might look like. Scams often share some common features, which can help you to recognise them.

What to do if you've been scammed

The worst has happened and you realise you've been scammed, here are some immediate steps you should take.

What to do if you've been scammed

Anyone can be the victim of a scam. Here are some steps you can take if you think you've fallen victim to scammers.

Don't panic

Take a deep breath and think clearly about what you can do next. You need to check if you can get your money back, report the scam and protect yourself from further risks.

Contact your bank immediately

If you think that you may have been scammed, it might not be too late to stop it if you act fast. They will also help you to freeze any cards or bank accounts if they've been compromised. Speak to your bank straight away by calling the number on the back of your card or by calling 159 and selecting your bank, for most major UK banks.

Gather all details of the scam, including who you have been in contact with (including names and any contact details they may have used), what information you have shared with them (including passwords or PINs), whether you've paid any money and what method you used to do this.

Report it

You can contact Police Scotland on the 101 non-emergency number to report it as a crime. If you feel threatened or unsafe because of your scammer you should call 999.

You can also read about different types of scams and frauds at www.scotland.police.uk

If the scam involves an investment, your pension, taking out a loan or credit, or insurance and warranty products, you can report it to the Financial Conduct Authority online at www.fca.org.uk or by calling 0800 111 6768 (freephone).

You can forward a suspicious email to report@phishing.gov.uk, and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) will investigate it.

Forward suspicious text messages to 7726. It's a free service, and will report the message to your phone provider.

You can report scam or misleading adverts found online, including on social media, to the Advertising Standards Authority at www.asa.org.uk

If you receive a scam HMRC text, email, letter or phone call - you can email phishing@hmrc.gov.uk or forward a text to 60599 - you'll be charged at your network rate.

Check HMRC's guidance on recognising scams at www.gov.uk

Speak to someone

Perhaps a friend or family member who can support you. Don't be embarrassed to discuss it. Remember, scammers are very clever and anyone can fall victim to them. If you and those around you share information, it can really help prevent others becoming victims of fraud.

Passwords

Change your passwords if you think they may have been compromised, or if you use the same password for several sites. You can read advice on how to create a strong password by the NCSC at www.ncsc.gov.uk.

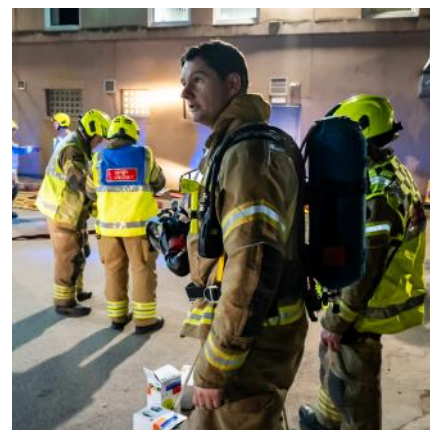
Credit reports

Monitor your credit report, particularly if you've been the victim of identity theft. This will help you to see if anyone tries to open accounts or take out credit in your name. Most of the main agencies will let you view your credit report and score for free, but you may need to sign up to a 30 day free trial and cancel it before you are charged a subscription fee.



Working in Partnership to Keep Our Communities Safe

Matthew Crabb
On-Call Watch Command Support Officer



Stonehaven Firefighters and Police Officers have been working closely together over the last few months. The partnership has evolved around community engagement and training for operational readiness.

A recent simulated fire scenario exercise carried out between Police Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue and was held at Stonehaven Police Station. Three fire engines and crew attended at Stonehaven Police Station for a simulated 'emergency.' Working closely with police officers and fire wardens the station was successfully evacuated and the 'fire' located and extinguished.

The Stonehaven Fire Crew (much like many other smaller towns) are made up of solely 'on call' or 'retained' firefighters. They play a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of their local communities. These dedicated individuals are firefighters who respond to emergencies during their agreed on-call hours, often balancing this responsibility with other jobs or personal commitments. On-call firefighters carry a pager and must be ready to respond to a variety of incidents, including fires, road traffic collisions, rescues, floods, and incidents involving hazardous materials.

The commitment required from an on-call firefighter is significant. They must be available to respond to emergencies at any time, which can be during the day or night, and they need to live or work within 8 minutes response from their fire station. This means they must have a flexible lifestyle and the support of their full-time employer.

A key part of an on-call firefighters' role is to focus on prevention through education, by partaking in community engagement activities, such as fire safety talks and home safety visits. This approach helps to build trust and rapport with the community and make it safer for everyone.

On-call firefighters are compensated for their time and effort. They receive an annual retainer fee, as well as additional payments for attending emergency calls, community events, training sessions and drill nights. However, our on-call firefighters are motivated by a strong desire to serve their community, not financial gain. The role is both rewarding and challenging, offering unique experiences that are not found in other jobs.

The responsibility of an on-call firefighter across Scotland is demanding. It requires a high level of dedication, professionalism and a broad range of personal skills and qualities. These firefighters are vital to the safety and resilience of their communities, providing an essential service that helps to protect lives and property.



Time to Hit the Road

Adult Support and Protection



Adult Support and Protection Day took place on Thursday, 20 February, 2025. The North East Crime Reduction Team hit the road and spent the week providing advice to community groups, libraries, pharmacies and surgeries across Grampian.

Financial harm can cover theft, fraud and pressure to sign over property or money. It also relates to rogue traders, online scammers and misuse of benefits.

People can be at increased risk to be harmed financially through factors such as ill health, trauma and physical or mental health conditions.

It can happen anywhere - in someone's home, where they work, or in a public place - and is often caused by the people closest to them. It can even happen in places responsible for keeping someone safe, such as a care home, hospital or day centre.

It's important to speak up about any concerns you have, as the person may not be able to do so themselves.

In the north east, officers have introduced a scheme which aims to identify people who may become susceptible to fraud through personal life circumstances, such as bereavement, ill health or other life changes.

These people don't necessarily meet the criteria for social services or additional care support but due to their circumstances they can be more vulnerable to fraud.

Several banks and bank managers are heavily involved through the banking protocol initiative, and officers work closely with them to ensure the appropriate measures are in place. They are fully supportive of the initiative.

Detective Inspector Kerry McCombie said: 'Protecting people from harm is not just about policing or working with partners, it is the responsibility of each and every one of us to watch out for vulnerable people in our communities who may be at risk of harm and to report concerns to someone who can help.'

Due to their vulnerability, the person being harmed may not be able to report it themselves, so it is vital that you look out for them and report anything you think is not right.

In response we work collaboratively with partners to ensure that the right support and most appropriate advice and assistance is provided to those who need it.'

Brenda Walker, National Adult Support and Protection Coordinator for Scotland, said: 'It can be difficult to know what to do when you're worried about someone, and you might feel that you don't want to interfere. However, reporting your concerns could really help to keep someone safe and turn their life around.'

'Everyone has a role to play in keeping those in their communities safe, so I would encourage anyone who has seen something that worries them to please say something.'

If you're worried that someone is at risk of harm or neglect from others - or harming or neglecting themselves - contact Police Scotland via 101.

Call 999 if you believe the person is in immediate danger.

Contacts
Aberdeen City
APSW@aberdeencity.gov.uk
0800 731 5520

Aberdeenshire
adultprotectionnetwork@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
01467 533100

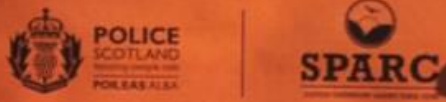
Moray
accesscareteam@moray.gov.uk
01343 563999



**POLICE
STOP ME**
BETWEEN 10PM AND 5AM



**POLICE
STOP ME**
BETWEEN 10PM AND 5AM



RURAL
Tackling Rural Vehicle Theft



Scotland, in particular, the Borders, along with areas in the North of England experience between £250,000 and £400,000 worth of vehicle, machinery and tool theft each month.

A new initiative to tackle rural vehicle and equipment theft is being rolled out within Scotland and neighbouring English constabularies.

Police Scotland will provide farming communities with a specially designed, waterproof sticker that can be displayed on tractors, excavators, and other rural machinery, encouraging police to stop them to verify ownership and permitted use during set hours where the machinery is not routinely used by the owners.

This will ensure anyone illegally in possession of the vehicle on the road network is more quickly identified and arrested.

Each month Police Scotland's Rural and Acquisitive Crime Team compile a report of rural crime, and it has found that in Scotland, in particular, the Borders, along with areas in the North of England experience between £250,000 and £400,000 worth of vehicle, machinery and tool theft each month.

Officers have worked alongside colleagues from the Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime (SPARC) and Northumbria, Durham and Cumbria Constabularies, to design the sticker, which will be offered to rural communities free of charge, either during engagement at their properties, from their local officers or when police attend agricultural events within the division.

Inspector Jordan Low from Police Scotland's Rural, Acquisitive and Business Preventions team said: 'We know that the theft of farming vehicles and machinery can have a significant financial impact on rural communities and alongside SPARC and our neighbouring English Constabularies, we have introduced this new sticker scheme to identify more easily those responsible for such offences which will complement existing cross-border partnership work already taking place.'

'Road Policing Officers and their local policing colleagues have been made aware of the scheme and throughout the course of their duties, should they come across a vehicle displaying one, they will stop and check the vehicle and driver ensure anyone driving is legally permitted to do so.'

'We are committed to tackling rural crime in all its forms and will continue to work alongside our key partners and the farming industry to explore any and all opportunities to reduce these offences and bring those responsible to justice.'

Sergeant Amanda McKirdy from Cumbria Police, Rural Crime Team added: 'We're committed to working alongside our border forces to tackle and reduce rural offending. By working together, we ensure we don't displace offenders, but we work together to protect all our communities. In Cumbria, we also use the police stop me stickers and have already issued many to our communities.'

RURAL Livestock Worrying

With Spring around the corner and lambing underway Police Scotland is reminding dog owners to keep their dogs under close control when in the countryside.

We may not think our family pet is capable of causing injury. But it is a dog's natural instinct to chase, so think ahead when you're out for your walk, about what might tempt your dog to run off and ensure you keep them under proper control.

Livestock worrying can occur when a dog attacks, chases or is at large in a field where livestock is kept. The devastating effects of a dog attack are evident and cannot be overstated but significant damage can also be caused by a dog simply being present in a field.

Pregnant ewes can abort their lambs or lambs can be separated from their mothers, causing distress and in some cases malnutrition.

The advice to anyone walking their dogs in the countryside is to ensure that they are under control at all times and avoid going into fields where livestock is grazing.



Phishing Emails



Phishing is a scam where criminals typically send emails to thousands of people. These emails pretend to come from banks, credit card companies, online shops and auction sites as well as other trusted organisations. They try to trick you into revealing sensitive information like passwords, credit card or bank details.

The embedded link in the email goes to a website that looks exactly like the real thing but is actually fake, designed to trick victims into entering personal details.

The email itself can also look as if it comes from a genuine source. Fake emails may display some of the following characteristics.

The sender's email address may be different from the trusted organisation's website address. Does it match the organisation they claim to represent? Look for misspellings, extra characters or an unusual domain name.

The email may be sent from a completely different address or a free webmail address.

The email may not use your proper name, but a non-specific greeting such as 'Dear customer' or 'Account Holder.'

Fraudsters often generate a sense of urgency, for example unless you act immediately, your account may be closed.

A prominent website link. These can be forged or seem very similar to the proper address, but even a single character's difference means a different website.

A request for personal information such as username, password or bank details. Legitimate organisations never ask for sensitive information.

You weren't expecting to get an email from the organisation that appears to have sent it.

Be cautious of clicking on links or opening attachments in emails from unknown senders. Hover over links to see the actual URL before clicking.

Staying Safe

Don't trust emails at face value, even if they appear to be from a familiar source. Always verify the sender's identity and the message's legitimacy.

Don't click on links in suspicious emails, instead, type the organisation's website address directly into your browser or use a bookmark.

Never share personal information via email, legitimate organisations will never ask for sensitive information like passwords or social security numbers via email.

Use strong passwords and enable two-factor authentication as these add extra layers of security to your accounts.

Keep your software updated, regularly update your operating system, browser, and antivirus software to patch security vulnerabilities.

Be cautious of public Wi-Fi. Avoid accessing sensitive accounts or sharing personal information on public Wi-Fi networks.

Educate yourself. Stay informed about the latest phishing tactics and scams.

Crime Alert

A selection of crimes affecting residents from across Grampian

Email Interception

An Aberdeen woman had her e-mail account hacked. Scammers intercepted communications between her and her Financial Advisor. She lost £20,000 from her pension fund.

Ticket Fraud

An Aberdeen resident bought Oasis concert tickets advertised on Facebook. It was a scam and she lost £600.

Daylight theft from home

An Aberdeen family had £3500 of electrical appliances and tools stolen from their home during the day after failing to secure their home.

Crypto Fraud

An Aberdeen resident saw an advert for Crypto Currency investments on Facebook. She 'invested' £12,000 in the scheme and lost her money.

Romance Fraud

An Aberdeen woman followed her favourite singer on Facebook. She developed what she believed to be a personal relationship and sent the person money over a 6 month period. She lost £68,000.

Employment Fraud

An Aberdeen student replied to an online job advert for carrying out product reviews. The role involved re-investing wages into a crypto wallet, which were never paid. The student lost £11,000.

Theft, Turriff

Four digger buckets and digger breaker were stolen from the Craigston area near Turriff.

Investment Fraud

A female student replied to an advert on TikTok from a female in digital marketing, with initial investments promising huge returns. She invested her savings. The advert was a scam and she lost £5000.

Sextortion

An Aberdeen victim met a female fraudster on an adult dating site. After a brief period they shared explicit images. The female threatened to share the images unless the victim paid £10,000.

Push Payment Fraud

An Aberdeen man received a phone call from scammers posing as his bank after an online purchase. He transferred money into what he believed was a 'safe account.' It was a scam and he lost £24,000.

Investment Scam

A Moray man has lost £14,000 to an investment scam after seeing an investment opportunity advertised on Facebook. After completing an online form he was contacted and made a small initial investment which appeared to be making gains. He was persuaded to invest more money before discovering it was a scam.

Housebreaking, Laurencekirk

A rural property on the outskirts of Laurencekirk was broken into. The intruders made off empty handed after being disturbed by a neighbour.

Housebreaking, Huntly

Thieves made off with an estimated £10,000 of power tools from an industrial depot near Huntly. The haul included high value chain saws and strimmer's.

Badgers Sett Disturbance, Alford

A man has been reported to the Procurator Fiscal after deliberately blocking the entrance to a badgers sett near Alford.

Hunting with Dogs, Stonehaven

Specialist wildlife crime officers have reported a man for deliberately hunting foxes with dogs in a rural area near Stonehaven.

Dog Attack, Aboyne

A man has been charged with having dogs dangerously out of control in a public place near Aboyne after a cyclist was chased and bitten.

Livestock Worrying, Alford

Two sheep were killed and another eleven seriously injured in a livestock worrying incident at a farm near Alford.

Heating Fuel Theft, St Cyrus

A rural property near St Cyrus had over 700 litres of domestic heating fuel stolen from a storage tank in the garden.

Messaging Fraud, Fraserburgh

An elderly Fraserburgh man was scammed out of nearly £1,000 having been contacted by fraudsters posing as his son. The fraudsters contacted the victim by text message asking him to save a 'new' phone number.

Keeping Our Communities in the North East Safe

Police Scotland's North East Division covers rural and urban areas in Moray, Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City. The division has five territorial command areas which have their own dedicated Area Commander, who is responsible for the daily policing function. Each command area is served by a number of community policing teams whose activities are built around the needs of the local community. These teams respond to local calls and look for long term solutions to key issues. They are assisted by the division's Crime Reduction Unit who deliver against

Force and local priorities in a number of areas, including physical and social crime prevention, supporting and enhancing community engagement and creating and sustaining strong and effective partnership working.

Website

www.scotland.police.uk

Twitter

www.twitter.com/NorthEPolice

Facebook

[www.facebook.com/
NorthEastPoliceDivision](http://www.facebook.com/NorthEastPoliceDivision)

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