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# Buddies urged to ask workmen for details

Dec 23 2011 by Kenneth Speirs, Paisley Daily Express

PEOPLE are being warned to make sure they ask for details of call-out charges and hourly rates when arranging emergency repairs this winter.

Complaints about hidden charges and exorbitant bills are common, particularly during the festive season, according to the Trading Standards department at East Renfrewshire Council.

Senior Trading Standards officer Paul Holland said: "Charges for emergency repairs, such as plumbing work, can be exorbitant, particularly at the weekend. It is essential that you ask details of the call-out charges and the hourly rate to prevent an unexpected hefty bill.

"You can end up paying hundreds of pounds for a couple of hours work. So know where your stopcock is located and turn off the water supply to minimise damage and give you the time to get a reasonably-priced repair from a local tradesman with a good reputation.

"I would strongly advise householders to keep a list of recommended tradesmen handy and a list of emergency contacts.

"It could save a lot of money and stress if things go wrong."

The list should at least include National Grid Gas Emergencies (Gas Leaks) 0800 111999; Scottish Water Emergency Helpline 0845 6008855; numbers for any insurance home cover policies; as well as the numbers of tradesmen, such as plumbers and joiners.

The trading standards team also recommends that people: Ask friends and family for recommendations

Get quotes detailing the work to be carried out as well as the cost

Ensure they know who they are dealing with;

Check guarantees are insurance backed

Avoid paying cash as cheques give proof of payment, and credit cards give the added protection of claiming against the provider if the trader goes bust.

If you don't know the trader and can't get recommended traders, look for someone who is a member of an Office of Fair Trading Trusted Trader Scheme. Call 0845 7224499 or www.oft.gov.uk

Over 60s can contact Care and Repair Renfrewshire to enquire about their Small Repairs Service.

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They also have a list of established traders on 0141 812 4111.

Contact Consumer Direct on 08454 040506 if you wish to make a complaint or get consumer advice.

Contact Ring and Report if you suspect a fraudulent workmen is operating in East Renfrewshire.

You should note the registration number of the van and any other details and then call 0800 0130076.

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