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I'd never heard of “**distraction burglary**” before, until one day a chap called at my house saying he needed to turn my water off as there was a leak down the road. There was no leak of course, he was what they call a “**distraction burglar**” trying to lie his way in to my home to steal.

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# Fighting Doorstep Crime

## Distraction Burglary Information leaflet

## What is Distraction Burglary?

Distraction burglary is where criminals call at your house posing as officials or asking for your help with something. They make up a story to get in to your home. Generally targeting older people, they have just one intention: **to steal!**

### How do they operate?

- Some work alone, but often they work in groups of two or more, usually one person will knock at your door with a convincing excuse that seems genuine or urgent
- The talker will persuade you to let them into your house and keep you occupied whilst others sneak in and search your house to steal cash and valuables
- They can be men, women or children and sometimes a combination, smartly or casually dressed.

### Remember

A genuine caller will happily wait outside while you check on them by calling their organisation and or calling a family member or neighbour.

**Distraction Burglary isn't common  
but we must all remain vigilant!**

Although the number of distraction burglaries is nowhere near the number of other crimes committed in the UK each day,

every police force does take this crime very seriously. We all work together with a national police unit called Operation Liberal, set up to help catch the criminals who carry out these dreadful crimes. We've been very successful too! Distraction burglaries are falling and we are catching more criminals and sending them to prison for longer spells than ever before – but with your help we want to stamp them out completely!

If you suspect a bogus caller is at your door call 999. The police are never too busy to attend even if it turns out to be a false alarm. Police would rather attend a false alarm than not be called to a distraction burglary.

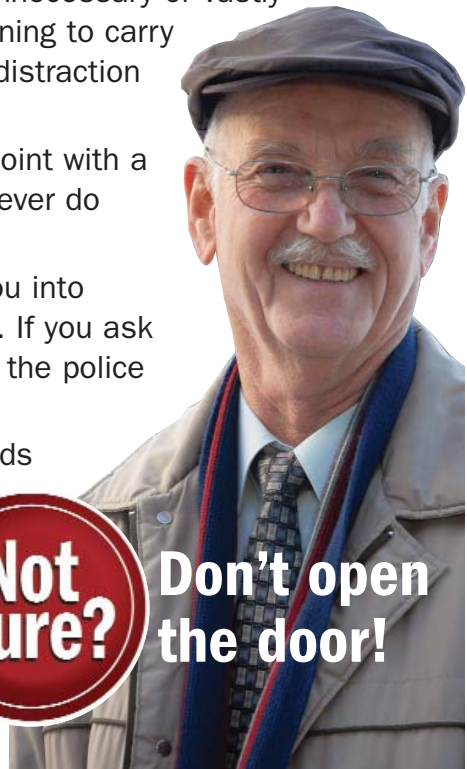
## Rogue traders

Rogue traders call at your door and offer to do work on your home or garden that will be either unnecessary or vastly over-priced. They have no formal training to carry out the work. Some have links with distraction burglars

- Don't ever go to a bank or cash point with a trader; legitimate traders would never do this!
- Don't allow anyone to pressure you into agreeing to have work carried out. If you ask them to leave and they don't, call the police dial 999.
- Do discuss any work you feel needs carrying out on your property with a relative or friend who can help you find a reputable trader.
- Don't agree to any work or sign anything on the spot.



**Don't open  
the door!**



## Common lies distraction burglars use to convince you to let them in

“**“I’m from the “Water Board”, there’s a leak down the road I need to check your water supply”**”

This will never be true. The phrase “water board” is no longer used by legitimate callers – only distraction burglars! Don’t open the door! Even if they say “It’s an emergency”. Your water supplier can easily be contacted to verify any caller – their number can be found on your water bill and directory enquiries. If they continue to insist you open the door, tell them you’re going to call the police on 999 – and do it!

**“I need to read your meter”**

Check with your utility company before you let them in. You can call the (freephone) Home Heat Helpline on 0800 33 66 99 (except N.Ireland) or your water company. You may also be able to join your utility provider’s password scheme.

**“We’re the police, we’ve caught a burglar, we think he’s stolen your cash and we need to check your money is safe.”**

Genuine police officers **never do this**. Don’t let them in! Some distraction burglars actually break in to your home then tell you they’re the police “looking for a burglar”. If you find anyone already in your home who says they’re from the police, they won’t be! Call the real police on 999 straight away.

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**In an emergency situation always call 999**

## A few tips to keep you safe

- If you're not sure who is at your door, don't open it! Check the identity of the caller by calling the company they are purporting to be from ie. Gas, Electricity, Water, Police. Use the telephone numbers listed in your local directory or provided independently by your service provider. **Do not use any telephone numbers provided by the caller, they may be bogus!**
- Telephone a neighbour or friend nearby to come along and check out the caller before you open the door to them.
- Some areas in the country have Neighbourhood Watch or Nominated Neighbour Schemes you can sign up to. Check with your local police Safer Neighbourhood Team to find out if there is one in your area.
- Many utility service providers like gas electricity and water, provide password schemes or hotline numbers for customers to call, to check the identity of callers before opening the door. Speak to your utility provider.
- Don't keep large quantities of cash at home; put it in the bank or post office where it is safe.
- Keep doors locked and windows secure at all times. Always keep your door chain on.
- If somebody asks for your help, needs to make a telephone call, has lost a ball in your garden, needs a drink or request a pen and paper for example, refer them to a younger neighbour or assist them through a closed door. Or call a friend or neighbour to come and assist.
- If you suspect a bogus caller has visited you, even if you didn't let them in, call the police straight away.  
We need to know!

# Useful contacts

**Victim Support** If you have been a victim of distraction burglary, the police will give your details to the charity Victim Support (unless you ask them not to). They will call you to find out if you need any support and explain how they can help. This can include sending a specially-trained volunteer to help you come to terms with the crime as well as practical support (eg. improving home security).

If you want to contact them immediately, Ring their national Supportline on **0845 30 30 900**. Find out more at [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

**Age UK** is the new force combining Age Concern and Help the Aged which includes Age Scotland, Age Cymru and Age NI. Their mission is to promote the well-being of all older people and to help make later life a fulfilling and enjoyable experience. For further information and advice, call **0800 00 99 66** or visit [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk).

**Consumer Direct** If you need help or advice regarding a trader contact Consumer Direct on **08454 04 05 06**, they can also offer advice on selecting a reputable trader in your area.

**Energy Suppliers** Offer the **Priority Service Register** (except N.Ireland), you are able to set up a **personal password system** for gas and electricity staff to use every time they call at your home. This will confirm they are genuine. To join PSR, call the (freephone) Home Heat Helpline on **0800 33 66 99**, or contact your energy supplier directly. Joining the PSR also entitles you to many more free services.

**Water Companies** Water company employees expect to wait outside while you check their identity. Use the number on your water bill or telephone directory to call your water supplier every time! For extra protection you can also call the same number to register a password.

**Neighbourhood & Home Watch Network (NHWN)** represents all Neighbourhood Watch & Home Watch members across England & Wales. Tel: **0116 2293 118**. Further information can also be found on the official website at [www.mynhw.co.uk](http://www.mynhw.co.uk) or Email: [nhwn.1@btinternet.com](mailto:nhwn.1@btinternet.com)



Supported by all the major energy suppliers

The logo for the Home Office, consisting of a purple curved line above the words "Home Office" in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

Home Office



Every police force  
in the UK working  
together to fight  
distraction burglary

