



For Immediate Release

9th December 2009

“BUYER BEWARE” DRIVE FOR INTERNET SHOPPERS

In the week that is set to be boom time for online Christmas shopping, experts are warning consumers to watch out when they shop.

It is predicted that Christmas shoppers will spend £4000 every second buying presents on the Internet, making mid December the busiest time of the year for online shopping.

So it's good news for shoppers that in the same week, the Metropolitan Police's e-crime unit has closed down 1219 websites which were operating fraudulently.

The sites were run by criminal gangs in Asia who opened websites with a .co.uk domain name to pose as genuine UK companies. They then offered Ugg boots, Tiffany jewellery and other fashionable items at knockdown prices to lure Internet customers into handing over their bank and credit card details.

At best the customers received counterfeit goods; at worst they received nothing at all and are now at risk of identity theft and further fraud as a result of giving confidential banking information to the criminals.

Said Jenny Howe, solicitor in consumer law at Enfield based solicitors, Vanderpump & Sykes: “If the price is too good to be true it probably isn't true. Counterfeiting goods is a crime comparable to theft and consumers need to think about who they are giving their bank

and credit card details to. In this particular case it was criminal gangs in Asia, who had apparently managed to get merchant services to take credit and debit cards.”

She added: “It seems that in some cases the fraudsters had also obtained genuine SSL certificates so they could display a golden padlock on the supposedly secure area of their sites”.

The consumer is given all sorts of protection to try and make Internet shopping a safe and convenient experience. If the consumer is dealing with a trustworthy trader, the first line of protection is the insurance normally provided by the credit card company.

If that fails it might be necessary to sue the trader. If the trader is a foreign company, European Union legislation steps in to protect the consumer. Article 5 of the Rome Convention on the Law Applicable to Contractual Obligations 1980 says that a consumer dealing with a foreign company should get the same protection as if they were dealing with a supplier in their own country.

Added Jenny: “*Buyer beware* - or *caveat emptor* - has been the seller’s defence for centuries but consumer protection legislation over the last century weighed things more in favour of the consumer. Now, Internet shopping has introduced new dangers for buyers and they really must beware.”

- ENDS -

For further information regarding this press release please contact Monica Myrie on: 020 8370 2858 or email: monicamyrie@vanderpumps.co.uk. This press release can be downloaded from www.vanderpumpandsykes.co.uk.

About Vanderpump & Sykes: Established since 1899, Vanderpump & Sykes is a well respected North London partnership offering a wide range of legal services to business and private clients.

Vanderpump & Sykes serve clients nationwide whilst retaining strong links with the local community. The friendly and dynamic team are specialists in company and commercial work as well as in the traditional areas of litigation, conveyancing, family, wills and probate.