

PR 9699

For Immediate Release

24 May 2010

Seizure of fake charity leaflets

Counterfeit charity leaflets have been seized from a van by Hertfordshire Trading Standards officers as they were about to be distributed to households across the county.

The van was stopped at South Mimms on Wednesday (May 19) using Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology as part of Operation Utah, a multi-agency operation led by Hertfordshire Constabulary.

It contained hundreds of leaflets, claiming to be from the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), rolled up with white bin liners to look like charity collection bags.

The leaflets provided a list of suitable items for collection and asked for them to be put in the bags provided and left outside in a place which is visible from the road before 9am on certain dates. They claimed that all collected clothing would be offered to the RNLI.

Subsequent investigations revealed that the leaflets and sacks are not connected in any way to the RNLI or the collecting company, Local Community Recycling Services Ltd, which do genuinely collect on behalf of the RNLI. The genuine collections do not use paper leaflets, but instead use printed sacks (not plain bin liners). Genuine sacks have RNLI details actually printed on them with the specific day of collection printed in a box.

Hertfordshire Trading Standards is continuing to investigate the source of the leaflets.

Keith Emsall, Executive Member for Community Safety, said: "This was a cynical attempt to trade on the reputation of the RNLI which relies on donations from the public. It may look like a minor crime, but the Association of Charity Shops say that bogus collections cost UK charities at least £2.5m-£3m a year. Fraudulent activities like this damage genuine charities who need our help to support the work they do."

If you suspect you have received a bogus charity bag or have any further information about any bogus charities please pass details to Trading Standards via Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06 or at www.consumerdirect.gov.uk. You can check registered charity details by contacting the Charity Commission on 0845 3000 218 or by visiting their website www.charity-commission.gov.uk.

ENDS

For political comment

Executive Member for Community Safety and Culture, Keith Emsall on 01462 674543

**For further information please contact: Andrew Dawson, Senior Press Officer
on 01992 588516.**