

ANGUS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENTAL AND LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE – 29 MAY 2003

THE SAFETY OF SECOND-HAND ELECTRICAL GOODS

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

**ABSTRACT**

This report summarises the findings of a survey carried out as a project by a staff member which looked at the safety of second-hand electrical goods being offered for sale within Angus.

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of this report, including the issues arising, for its interest.

**2. BACKGROUND**

A survey of second-hand electrical goods, and a resultant report, was carried out as part of a project by a member of staff of Environmental and Consumer Protection, who is studying for the Diploma in Trading Standards. (A copy of the Report is available in the Member's Lounge.)

The businesses subject to the survey included second-hand dealers, antique/bric-a-brac, charity shops, auctions and car boot sales.

A variety of second-hand electrical appliances were purchased from the various sellers. The goods ranged from table lamps and irons to vacuum cleaners and xmas lights.

Basic screening tests were carried out within the Department, and further testing by independent qualified electricians and a test house were conducted on selected items.

Of the 30 items purchased, 14 were found to be satisfactory, 11 failed on visual defects and 5 were found to be potentially hazardous to users.

**3. ACTIONS**

The majority of the dealers involved were given advice on electrical appliance safety by way of discussions with officers, and provision of a guidance leaflet.

Follow-up visits will be made and appropriate action taken against those dealers who fail to heed advice.

At least two dealers are being reported to the Procurator Fiscal for safety infringements; and others have already received written warnings.

**4. ISSUES ARISING**

- a) Much more needs to be done by dealers to examine such second-hand goods prior to sale. Many defects were easily spotted by visual examination, and the faults should have been rectified before sale.
- b) More needs to be done to educate dealers as to their responsibilities. Whilst failure to expertly examine goods prior to sale is not in itself a breach of legislation, selling unsafe goods is, and dealers need to be encouraged to bring in qualified people to do checks on goods prior to sale.
- c) Whilst dealers in fixed premises can be dealt with in the above manner, sellers at markets and/or car boot sales are itinerant, and may claim not to be selling in the course of a business. Tighter control over activities at markets and car boot sales in relation to electrical goods, is a must.
- d) There needs to be closer liaison between Environmental and Consumer Protection and the Law and Administration Licensing section, to ensure the licensing provisions of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 are being utilised to the full in relation to conditions attached to second-hand dealers licences. This should also apply to the licensing of markets and car boot sales within Angus.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **6. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

There are no human rights implications associated with this report.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

The Chief Executive, Director of Law and Administration and Director of Finance have been consulted on the contents of this report.

**S R Heggie**  
**Director of Environmental and Consumer Protection**

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing this report.

**JM/FMCI**  
**7.5.03**