



# Colin's Blog

Friday 1<sup>st</sup>. December 2017

On the first day of December, I have shaken off the moths, checked for any spiders, and put on my best red suit, ready to gather my reindeers and head off to the local primary school.

Having lost two stone in weight, the suit actually fits me again, and I look forward to joining the elves for the annual gathering, which marks the start of our 'Christmas spirit.' Luckily, I am rather fond of mince pies and a wee glass of sherry, which I will enjoy,

back home, after my matinee performance. As for the reindeers, they are happy munching their way through a bag of fresh East Anglian carrots!

## FESTIVE WATCH

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, I am conscious of the need for all of us to be extra vigilant at this time of year, which is a golden opportunity for what one calls: 'opportunist thieves,' who are especially active, as we go about, visiting shops, shopping centres and Christmas markets, giving the thieves many opportunities to try-out their skills.



So, I make no apology for reminding everyone to 'Keep Alert, and keep your money and credit / debit cards, well hidden, preferably inside a zipped coat pocket. Do not keep your wallet or purse in the back pocket of trousers. Never have your purse or wallet on display at the top of shopping bags or open handbags. Adjacent

Do not walk through crowded areas whilst talking on a mobile phone, especially if you are walking along a street close to the roadside, as you immediately put yourself at risk from the scumbags whose latest craze is to mount the pavement on their moped or scooters, catching you unaware, and snatching your mobile phone, before making off at speed.

If using a 'contactless card, 'or any credit / debit card, to purchase goods, be aware of people around you, and, if typing in your pin number during a normal transaction, always cover or shield your actions on the keyboard.

When buying Christmas Gifts, don't be tempted to purchase designer goods or expensive electrical goods which are on offer at seemingly ridiculous knock down

prices, unless you are reasonably certain that they are not fake goods, which of course flood the market at this time of year.

Whilst writing about risks, let's not forget the ever-present risk of a Terrorist attack, especially if we are visiting crowded shopping areas or other public venues, we all need to remain vigilant and, where possible, to immediately alert the police and security services using 999 in an emergency or the Terrorist Hotline: -



I am always concerned to hear about the number of people, who, apparently unaware of the fire risks, leave their mobile phones, tablets and laptops, charging overnight. Many fires are caused through electrical goods being left charging overnight. Once fully charged, there is a risk that they will then overheat and catch fire.

## LATEST FROM ACTION FRAUD: - **Advice for Uber customers and drivers**

Posted 24th November 2017. **The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has issued advice to customers and drivers after a breach was reported to them.**

A breach of Uber customers' and drivers' records from October 2016 was reported to the NCSC on Tuesday 21 November 2017.

Based on current information, the NCSC have not seen evidence that financial details have been compromised. They are working with the ICO to verify the extent of this breach, including the type and volume of information compromised.

### **NCSC advice**

- **Do not feel obliged to delete the app.** The incident took place over a year ago and we have seen no evidence of additional risk having the app on your phone today.
- **Immediately change passwords you used with Uber.** Legitimate users can make a compromised password useless by replacing it with a new one the attacker does not know. If you re-used the same password on other accounts, you should change the password on those too.
- **Be alert to potential phishing emails.** Phishing attacks can come through emails sent by strangers that mimic an established or trusted party to lure compromising information from the recipient. Since Uber's data includes personal information, such as customers' phone numbers and driving licence information, these could be used by scammers to make phishing emails more convincing.

- **Be vigilant to potential scam phone calls.** Be especially vigilant against phone calls you receive. If you do receive a phone call that is suspicious - for example, one that asks you for security information - do not divulge any information and hang up. When you next pick up the phone, make sure there is a dial tone to ensure the caller is not still on the line. Immediately contact the organisation that the caller claimed to be from using a phone number gained from their company website. Do not use any details provided during the previous call – these could be bogus.
- **Contact us if you think you have been a victim.**

**ActionFraud**  
 Report Fraud & Internet Crime  
**0300 123 2040**

[https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/report\\_fraud](https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/report_fraud)



As the countdown to Christmas begins, I remember that during my days as a rural policeman, my thoughts would have been turning towards the need to be extra vigilant around farms and small holdings, watching out for poachers, especially in the vicinity of those who are rearing turkeys, chickens, ducks and geese for the Christmas market, and also keeping a watchful eye on land where Christmas trees are being grown ready for the festive season.

With our communities becoming more diverse, and many of our community coming from different cultural backgrounds, there has been an increase in the taking of wildfowl, swans and indeed freshwater fish across the UK, so, especially at this time of year, fisheries, rivers, lakes and ponds are also in need of protection.

If you see any suspicious activity going on, such as a crime in progress, do not put yourself at risk, please dial 999, or otherwise, for passing on information, dial 101 or report information online at: <https://www.essex.police.uk/do-it-online/>

Alternatively, you can pass on information anonymously to CrimeStoppers:-



My blog is circulated to more than 24,000 Neighbourhood Watch members and subscribers primarily across, Epping Forest, Brentwood and Harlow, but also to some other areas of Essex and to London Community Watch.

You can also read my Blog at: -

<http://www.eppingforestnhw.org.uk/>

You can contact me or unsubscribe at: [colin@neighbourhoodmatters.org.uk](mailto:colin@neighbourhoodmatters.org.uk)

Join in on spreading the Christmas spirit in your community: -

Christmas can be a lonely time for older people; their children have grown, left home and have families of their own to worry about. Some, sadly, may have lost their husband, wife or old friends and feel isolated. While your own preparations may seem never-ending, here are some ideas to help make "the most wonderful time of the year" live up to its name for your older relatives and neighbours: -

**Check on them regularly.**

Could you visit once a week? Just popping in to share a cup of tea and chat for half an hour might make your neighbour feel less alone if they do not have friends or family nearby, or remind your relatives that they have not been forgotten. Let them know that they are welcome to telephone you should they need anything even if it is just to talk for a few minutes. If you live away from your older relatives, arrange to talk on the phone every couple of days.

**Make sure they are warm.**

As temperatures drop the elderly quickly notice the change; check that they are aware of their **Winter Fuel Allowance** and are getting the best use out of it. You could help by bleeding their radiators, sealing any gaps in window or door frames that might let in draughts and ensuring that they have enough warm clothing.

**Offer to help with shopping.**

Before heading out to the supermarket to do your weekly shop call round to ask if your neighbour or relative would like to come or if they have a list you can take for them. You could also extend this to taking them to doctor's appointments or collecting prescriptions so that they needn't go out if the weather is particularly inclement.

**Invite them in.**

If you are having a few of the neighbours' round for mince pies and mulled wine don't forget to ask those who are a little older; this could provide an opportunity for them to meet new people, some of whom could offer to help out too and widen your older neighbour's opportunities for social contact.

**Include them in your Christmas dinner.**

If you have siblings who also live in close proximity to your parents you might take it in turns to host them for Christmas day or perhaps, if family size allows, all celebrate together to **share the tasks** of cooking, watching the children and entertaining your older relatives. Be careful not to take on too much; ask for help from your family or other neighbours if you are unable to do everything and don't be embarrassed if you have to say "No" or "Not at the moment" to a request. If you can find a balance between helping everyone else and making time for yourself everyone should be able to enjoy Christmas.