

# Be cautious and know your rights when shopping online

Take extra care when shopping online. Always do some research before placing an order or doing business. Remember, if it looks too good to be true, then it probably is – don't find out the hard way.

## **Do some research**

Bad experiences shopping online can vary from slow or non-delivery of goods right through to scams where people lose hundreds or thousands of pounds.

When shopping on the internet, whether a website, online marketplace or social media platform, it's not always easy to know who you're dealing with. For example, just because a web address ends in '.co.uk' there's no guarantee that the business is based in the UK – check the seller has a UK contact address.

Before buying online, including if you're booking a holiday, you're advised to use the internet to research if there are any problems with the business you are thinking of dealing with.

Searching online using the business's name followed by the word 'scam' can be particularly helpful, as can searching online reviews and forums.

Always check reviews and feedback on sellers. However, even customer reviews can be fake, particularly those that are over-complimentary and at odds to the many other reviews posted. Never rely on reviews from one website

## **Your rights**

When you buy goods online from a trader, the goods must be of satisfactory quality as described and fit for purpose.

If there's a problem with the item you could be entitled to a refund, replacement or repair within the first 30 days from when you bought it.

A refund can be claimed for up to six months from purchase if the goods can't be repaired or replaced.

As well as this, you will normally have up to 14 days after receiving the goods to change your mind and get a refund.

However, when buying from a private seller you should be aware that your rights are different.

You need to be careful if taking advantage of deals on online marketplaces such as Amazon, Gumtree or eBay, or on social media.

Goods must be as described, but this is the only requirement and you may encounter practical difficulties in sorting an issue if things go wrong. Sellers may also be overseas.

You can get more information at this link:

## **Buying online advice**

Before buying something online:

- make sure the website you're on is authentic and the payment page secure by checking that the address starts with 'https' and there's a closed padlock in the address bar
- always pay by card or another secure method such as PayPal
- never pay by bank or money transfers, which are a preferred method by scammers
- be careful the goods aren't counterfeit
- always read the small print if you see 'free' or 'low-cost' trial goods
- if it's events tickets, make sure you only buy from official websites
- always log out of an online shopping account once you've paid
- check the seller's terms and conditions, including cancellation rights and any dispute resolution systems
- watch out for emails or texts from parcel delivery firms telling you to open an attachment for your delivery note – a real delivery firm wouldn't send you that
- be cautious about links or attachments in unexpected emails or messages

If a business tells you that you have to make a transfer as their card facilities are down, then try another company.

## **How to complain about online shopping**

Anyone who wants to complain about an online shopping experience, or feels that they are a victim of a scam or suspect a scam, should contact [Consumerline](#) either by phone on 0300 123 6262 or [online](#).

## **More useful links**

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## **[Road users urged to be 'bike smart'](#)**

Drivers are urged to pay extra attention to people who cycle or ride motorcycles. We all share the responsibility for road safety, whether as a motorist, motorcyclist, cyclist or pedestrian.

## Advice for drivers

The [Highway Code](#) provides specific advice to drivers on how to [take extra care](#) around those on two wheels.

In particular, give cyclists and motorcyclists at least as much room as you would when overtaking a car.

A bike is much harder to see than a car – so extra effort and a greater level of awareness are needed where bikes are concerned.

When you're driving, look out for riders:

- when turning right
- when emerging from junctions
- when overtaking

Drivers also need to:

- slow down
- pay greater attention to their surroundings
- never drive after drinking or taking drugs
- always wear a seatbelt

There is further information at this link:

## Advice for cyclists and motorcyclists

Cyclists and motorcyclists are extremely vulnerable on the roads. When involved in a road collision, their injuries tend to be more severe.

Before they take to the road, they should make sure that they can be seen with appropriate clothing and lighting.

They (as well as pedestrians) need to be aware of their surroundings and, particularly at this time of year, make every effort to be seen by wearing reflective or hi-vis clothing.

Motobike riders also need to:

- slow down
- pay greater attention to their surroundings
- never ride a motorbike after drinking or taking drugs

You can get more useful advice on the [rules and advice for drivers and riders page](#).

## More useful links

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# [Strong winds and heavy rain warning – information and advice](#)

With a weather warning for strong winds and heavy rain in place today there could be travel delays, power cuts, large waves in coastal areas, localised flooding, fallen trees, damage to property, and risk of flying debris.

## **Weather warning**

The Met Office has sent out a [weather warning for strong winds and heavy rain](#).

Weather warnings let the public and emergency services know about potentially hazardous conditions.

You can find out more about weather warnings on [the Met Office website](#).

## **Emergency numbers**

You should note the following numbers in case of emergency:

- Emergency services – 999 or 112
- Northern Ireland Electricity Networks – 03457 643 643
- NI Gas Emergency Service – 0800 002 001
- Northern Ireland Water Waterline – 03457 440 088
- Flooding Incident Line – 0300 2000 100
- Housing Executive – 03448 920 901

## **Report a fallen tree or blocked road**

You can report a fallen tree or blocked road at the following link:

## **Reporting a power cut**

If your power is off and you want to report it or get more information, contact NIE Networks or visit their website:

You can find an updated list of areas affected by power cuts on the [NIE Networks website](#).

## **Heavy rain and flooding advice**

You can get information about how to prepare for flooding and other useful information on this page:

If any flooding happens, you can report it by phoning the Flooding Incident Line on 0300 2000 100.

There is general flooding advice in the following section:

## **Roads information**

You can get the latest updates about roads at this link:

## **School closures**

You can find information about school closures at this link:

## **Public transport**

For the latest information on bus and train services, go to the 'Travel update' section on the [Translink website](#).

## **Forests, country parks and nature reserves**

You're advised not to visit forests, [country parks](#) and [nature reserves](#) until the strong winds weather warning is over due to the increased risks of fallen trees, branches and debris.

## **Advice for road users**

All road users are asked to pay attention to any road signs and temporary arrangements put in place during severe weather. Longer journey times or cancellations are possible as road, rail, air and ferry services are affected, with the chance that some roads and bridges could close.

High-sided vehicles are most affected by windy weather, but strong gusts can also blow a car, cyclist, motorcyclist or horse rider off course. This can happen on open stretches of road exposed to strong cross winds, or when passing bridges or gaps in the hedges.

In very windy weather a vehicle may be affected by turbulence created by large vehicles. Motorcyclists are particularly affected, so keep well back from them when they are overtaking a high-sided vehicle.

Motorists are also advised to drive with care due to possible wind-blown debris.

## **Travel advice**

If you're planning to travel by air or sea, you should check with the ferry company or airline in case there are any delays or cancellations.

## **Strong winds advice**

You should:

- keep your property in a well-maintained condition (for example replace/

repair any loose roof tiles, guttering, and so on that could potentially come loose and cause injury or damage to property)

- secure loose objects such as ladders, garden furniture, wheelie bins, trampolines, or anything else that could be blown around
- close and securely fasten doors and windows
- park vehicles in a garage (if you have one) or keep them clear of buildings, trees, walls, and fences
- make sure you are prepared should there be a power cut

During a storm you should:

- stay indoors as much as possible
- if you do go out, try not to walk or shelter close to buildings and trees
- not go outside to repair damage while the storm is ongoing
- not drive unless your journey is really necessary
- if you're a farmer, not enter fields bordered by trees or with powerlines unless absolutely necessary

After a storm you should:

- be careful not to touch any electrical/ telephone cables that have been blown down or are still hanging
- not walk too close to walls, buildings, and trees as they could have been weakened

## **Preparing for a power cut**

It's important to be prepared for a potential loss of power. You should:

- know where your household fuses and trip switches are so that you can check if the problem is with your electrics only
- test smoke alarms regularly
- keep a supply of new batteries in torches and radios (for checking updates on news bulletins)
- keep a supply of candles
- keep mobile phones, laptops or tablets fully charged – so you will have use of battery power for a short time at least
- have the telephone numbers you might need to hand (as well as mobile phones, a non-mains powered landline telephone will help you stay in touch during any disruptions to your power supply)
- if you have a baby at home, make sure you have a supply of pre-prepared formula baby milk (if used) and prepare a flask of hot water to heat bottles and baby food (it is always safer to make up a fresh feed; when this is not possible, feeds should never be stored for longer than 24 hours)

If you depend on electrical equipment that is vital to your health, contact Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) Networks to get on their Critical Care Register:

## If your electricity goes off

If your electricity goes off, you should:

- check your fuses and trip switches – then check if your neighbours are without power
- leave one light on
- leave your fridge/ freezer switched on with the door shut to maintain a low temperature
- check that other electrical appliances and machinery are switched off at the wall
- preferably use a torch, oil or gas lamp as a source of light rather than candles
- if you must use naked flames, please take extra care and make certain that they are put out before you go to bed
- check on elderly or vulnerable neighbours in your area to make sure they are okay
- if you are using a generator, be careful where you site it in case of carbon monoxide poisoning

## Water supply

In the event of difficulties with the water and sewerage, you will get the most up-to-date information on areas experiencing disruption on the [NI Water website](#). This includes a full postcode search facility.

You can also phone Waterline 24 hours a day/ 365 days a year on:

## More useful links

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## [Dangers of buying fake goods](#)

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People are being warned about the dangers of buying counterfeit goods, particularly health and safety risks. Fake goods may seem like a bargain but they can be dangerous and also could be funding organised crime.

## Sub-standard

Anyone buying [counterfeit goods](#) may see the sub-standard materials and replica logos as a small price to pay for cut-price 'designer' brands.

However, not only can many of the products cause harm, but profits from the sales may be used to help pay for other illegal activities such as drug dealing and [human trafficking](#).

Thousands of websites are dedicated to the sale of counterfeit goods.

To [avoid online fraud](#), be aware not just of what you're buying but also that using these sites to buy something leaves you open to:

- identity fraud
- having your devices and bank accounts compromised

## **Report sale of suspected fake goods**

To report the sale of suspect counterfeit goods contact:

## **More useful links**

Share this page

## **Feedback**

Would you like to leave feedback about this page? [Send us your feedback](#)

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# **[Prepare for winter driving conditions](#)**

Road users are urged to take extra care during the darker months and be prepared for the challenges of winter driving. From now until April around 300 staff, 130 gritters, and 12 snow blowers will be on standby to keep traffic moving on main roads during wintry conditions.

## **Take extra care on roads**

Darker mornings, evenings and lower temperatures around this time of year make conditions more difficult.

Road surface temperatures are usually a few degrees lower, so drivers should not rely on in-car temperature sensors as an indicator of possible frost or ice.

Drivers should:

- slow down
- stay focused and alert



- never ever drink or take drugs and drive
- always wear a seatbelt

In particular, watch out for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders, as they will be much more difficult to see in the dark mornings and evenings.

Remember, you should heed the advice in the Highway Code and drive, ride or cycle with extra care, even if roads have been salted.

You should also be prepared for road conditions changing over short distances, and take care when overtaking gritters.

You should note that:

- a journey could start or end on an untreated section of road
- salt does not act immediately, it needs vehicles to turn it into an effective solution
- roads can refreeze after spreading, particularly in showery conditions

There is more information on the page below:

We all have a personal responsibility to keep ourselves and other road users safe.

## **Salting roads**

The main roads which carry more than 1,500 vehicles a day are salted. In exceptional circumstances, some roads carrying between 1,000 and 1,500 vehicles daily will also be salted.

Arrangements are also in place to get the help of contractors, including farmers, to clear blocked roads following heavy snow.

The following page has more information:

Extra salt bins are provided on routes not included as part of the gritting network. These are free-of-charge for people to use themselves.

## **Up-to-date road conditions information**

You can get up-to-date information about road conditions during the winter on the [TrafficwatchNI](#) website.

## **More useful links**