



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

85 per cent of lock safety advice unsatisfactory

-- Mystery shopper findings reveal lack of knowledge among DIY outlets --

Eighty five per cent of Focus, Homebase and B&Q staff approached in a mystery shopper experiment offered shoddy advice on lock requirements, new research reveals today (11 December 2009).

Commissioned by the Master Locksmiths Association (MLA) the mystery shopper investigation found that 63 per cent of staff in some of the UK's best known DIY outlets rated poorly when it came to lock knowledge; while only 15 per cent of 'shoppers' would rate advice received as satisfactory.

Three scenarios tested lock knowledge on various locking system (open, restricted and patented systems) multiple occupancy housing regulations and insurance stipulations. Mystery shoppers found a lack of understanding of lock requirements among staff meant they were not offered the right advice or asked appropriate questions.

Across all of the scenarios some vital questions were overlooked by sales staff, often meaning they were unable to provide appropriate advice on lock suitability.

Following the initial enquiry only a quarter (25 per cent) of 'shoppers' were proactively asked for more information about what type of lock they needed, while only seven per cent of assistants enquired about the number of keys required and just five per cent asked about insurance requirements.

In addition, none of the staff asked if locks were required for escape doors while less than two per cent asked if locks were required for fire doors. Factors which greatly affect let properties for tenant and landlords, while facilities managers need to be aware of these requirements for accommodation such as hotels, care homes and boarding schools.

For further information please contact:

Dr Steffan George, Director of Business Development, Master Locksmiths Association
5D Great Central Way, Woodford Halse, Daventry, Northants NN11 3PZ
Mob: 07814 911040, Tel: 01327 262255, E-Mail: steffan.george@locksmiths.co.uk

Across all scenarios open, restricted and patented keys were only mentioned by seven per cent of assistants; only three per cent mentioned keyless exit options (vital in the case of a fire) and 12 per cent spoke of security requirements. In addition, less than a quarter (23 per cent) referred to Kite Mark and only a third (33 per cent) spoke about BS 3621 standards. Alarming none of the 'shoppers' were told about some of the most common lock standards – PAS 24 or the BS X621 family of standards.

Commenting on the findings Dr Steffan George, development director for the MLA said: "This research shows that some of the UK's leading home and DIY outlets appear to be making big mistakes when it comes to lock safety; which is particularly disconcerting given the Government's recently launched home security pack includes discount vouchers for all three outlets.

"Selecting the correct lock should not be a simple case of picking one off the shelf – consumers really do need specialist advice when choosing which lock is right for them so it is disappointing to discover that these well respected outlets rated so poorly in this research.

"As well-trained, licensed and trusted professionals MLA members' knowledge on occupancy numbers, insurance stipulations, British Standards and legislation is vital in deciding which lock best meets homeowners, landlords and tenants needs."

Research was conducted nationwide by Launchpad Research over a ten day period with trips divided equally between 60 outlets of the three retail brands by Market Research Society (MRS) trained field interviewers.

The research also found:

- In the multiple occupancy regulations scenario **none** of the interviewers were advised to buy a BS 8621 lock – the one which should have been recommended, while 10 per cent mentioned an unsuitable lock
- **Six in ten** (62 per cent) 'shoppers' were referred to at least one other colleague when the first staff member felt unable to handle the enquiry
- **Ten per cent** of mystery shoppers were referred to three staff members when the first member of staff did not feel able to help with an enquiry, while two per cent of participants were referred to four members of staff
- Nearly **eight in ten** (76 per cent) 'shoppers' were not satisfied with the accuracy of the information received across all three scenarios
- More than **eight in ten** (83 per cent) felt that the response they received did not fully match that which was outlined in the scenario provided
- In more than **nine out of ten** instances staff were not on hand to offer advice, with **90 per cent** of interviewers having to leave the lock aisle to actively seek assistance

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“MLA members are trained to ensure the advice consumers receive is up-to-date and appropriate to individual needs. Members will also supply a specialist fitting service to ensure the recommended products are securely installed and whilst locksmiths are on-site they can assess your situation thoroughly and where required offer further advice on increasing overall home security,” added Dr George.

“Although the research did show that some members of staff offered great advice, overall there is a widespread lack of expertise across the outlets. The ‘shoppers’ felt that although staff understood what was required they did not have the knowledge to be able to offer guidance on suitable products.

“Our advice is simple – when it comes to your security it is not worth taking chances so hiring a regulated, respected professional is the only way to ensure a strong, robust and long-term solution.”

Notes to Editors

About the MLA

The Master Locksmiths Association is a non-profit making body; established to set and promote standards of conduct, practice and materials within the locksmithing industry. It encourages its members to further their knowledge through ongoing education, regional meetings, seminars, its membership magazine Keyways and its website. Standards of entry to the MLA are rigorous and high (including CRB checks and inspections), and its ethos of "Skill and Integrity" exists to ensure that the public, government and industry receive the appropriate service and advice on security matters provided by its members. Created in 1958, the MLA became a limited company in 1986 and now the membership, currently standing at over 1400, is world-wide. The MLA is now the leading trade association for the locksmithing industry and is recognised as the authoritative body for locksmithing by the Police, the Home Office, the British Standards Institute, Insurers Property Crime Research Group (IPCRes) and Building Research Establishment (BRE) amongst others. The MLA also offers a full suite of training courses to the trade, held at their purpose built training facility at their headquarters in Daventry. Sold Secure, the leading independent security test and validation laboratory is a wholly owned subsidiary of the MLA.

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