

Report to the Tyne and Wear Trading Standards Joint Committee

30 June 2016

Unsafe Electrical Chargers

Paul Dowling, Strategic Director, Communities and Environment, Gateshead Council

Purpose of the report

To inform the Committee of how the testing facilities available at the laboratory assist officers with investigations.

Electrical Chargers

1. In 2014 The Committee received a report on the National Trading Standards Product Safety at Ports Project. The primary aim of the project is to prevent illegal and unsafe products being placed on the market in the United Kingdom.
2. In April 2016 North Tyneside trading standards received information from the project team that they had examined a parcel destined for an address on an industrial estate in North Tyneside. They believed that the novelty pens contained within the parcel contravened safety legislation.
3. Based on this intelligence received, officers visited the warehouse in North Tyneside. The warehouse was full of goods including toys, novelty items, clothes and electrical items.
4. Amongst the electrical items were around 300 AC adaptors, used to charge Apple devices, and around 100 universal travel adaptors for charging devices such as laptops and mobile phones. All had been imported from China.
5. Samples of the products were tested at the Tyne and Wear Trading Standards Laboratory at Gateshead. Within a couple of days the laboratory was able to inform officers that the items were found to be electrically unsafe. Some of the chargers posed a risk of electric shock to its users.
6. Consequently, within 48 hours of visiting the warehouse all the devices were seized and removed from the supply chain to UK consumers. Enquiries are continuing into the circumstances surrounding their importation.
7. This investigation demonstrates the added value that the laboratory brings to the region, in particular the speedy response to allow officers to act swiftly. If these items had been sent to a private test house the cost and time taken would have been significant.
8. The investigation also makes it clear that the work conducted under the product safety at Borders Ports project is a worthwhile and very productive project which

has benefits across the United Kingdom in ensuring that illegal and unsafe consumer products do not reach consumers in the UK.

Recommendation

9. The Committee is asked to note the information.