



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Brits at risk from rogue locksmiths

-- Master Locksmiths Association issues warning to consumers --

Experts issue safety warning as research reveals over 60 per cent of locksmiths currently working in the UK are unlicensed.

As the authoritative body for the locksmithing industry the Master Locksmiths Association (MLA) is calling on consumers to consider if they are inadvertently giving one of the country's 6,500 unlicensed locksmiths unregulated access to their homes and businesses.

The organisation is also encouraging homeowners, tenants and businesses to think about when their locks were last replaced, how many excess copies of keys are in circulation and if locks meet current safety standards.

Dr Steffan George, business development director for the MLA said: "We have recently discovered that even the main door and safe locks of one of the biggest financial institutions in the UK, the Bank of England headquarters in London, haven't been upgraded since the 1930s.

"Although the bank obviously doesn't rely solely on locks to maintain its security levels and extra physical security has been added over the years to ensure it is safe, the fact that even one of the most iconic banks in the world hasn't changed its locks in over 70 years suggests that perhaps it is also time for the British public to think about whether their locks are due an upgrade.

“People often don’t consider that they are, in effect, giving unlimited access to their homes and businesses when hiring a locksmith. But these people are skilled tradesmen with the knowledge and tools to gain entry into property without any sign of forced entry so it is important that care is given to picking a reputable expert with the skills and expertise to provide tailored advice.”

The MLA is also keen to highlight the potential danger of easily copied keys which past residents, friends, partners or rogue locksmiths could potentially make copies of and use to enter the property at a later date.

Justin Freeman, technical manager from the MLA adds: “It is concerning to think that anyone who has previously had access to a key for your home or business could quite easily have made copies and grant themselves access when they please. Landlords, tenants and homeowners should be encouraged to ask questions about surplus keys and where there are any concerns we would recommend that locks are changed.

“One solution to ensure spare keys are kept to a minimum is to install a system with keys which can’t be easily copied. Patented keys carry legal protection preventing copies from being made, while restricted keys are unlikely to be copied due to their unusual design and unique mechanical features. As long as any official keys are returned when someone leaves a property then there shouldn’t be any surplus ones. Where keys are not returned reconfiguring the lock and issuing new keys is an option and saves time and expense.”

After intense lobbying, the MLA has been granted the right to carry out Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks on all of its members and would-be locksmiths, applying for MLA training courses or licences.

Dr George added: “Although we do not believe it necessary for all tradesmen to undergo CRB checks, where professionals have the skills and knowledge to access people’s homes without being detected, as in this instance, then we feel CRB checks are essential to ensuring public safety.

“By selecting a MLA licensed locksmith people are safe in the knowledge that the tradesman in their home or business has not been convicted of a crime which could put them in a potentially dangerous situation. All MLA members adhere to our strict code of conduct and are trained to provide the best possible security advice; offering consumers real peace of mind and putting them in the hands of regulated and respected professionals.”

Chief Executive of the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Steve Long added: “Since 2002, the CRB has helped many thousands of organisations detect from recruiting or licensing unsuitable people. In the past year, CRB checks stopped around 18,000 unsuitable people from getting into positions of trust.

“The Master Locksmiths’ Association is the latest organisation which can now start to use CRB checks to enhance how they licence their members. This will bring greater security and reassurance to those that use their services.”

Ends

Notes to Editor

Issued on behalf of the Master Locksmiths Association by Karol Marketing Group. For further information, pictures or to set up interviews please contact Hayley Ford or Rachel Reay on 0191 265 7765 or email hayley@karolmarketing.com / rachel@karolmarketing.com

Interviews available

Dr Steffan George, development director, Master Locksmiths Association – available to comment on press release, history of the Master Locksmiths Association, recent CRB ruling, membership and code of conduct.

Justin Freeman, technical manager, Master Locksmiths Association – expert on key security, locks, Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) lock and door requirements and technical aspects of locksmithing industry.

About the MLA

The Master Locksmiths Association (MLA) was established over 50 years ago to set and promote standards of conduct, practice and materials within locksmithing. With members in the UK and some in the rest of the world, the MLA is recognised as the authoritative body for locksmithing by the police, home office and other leading organisations such as the British Standards Institute.

As a not for profit association, the MLA ensure its member companies undergo strict vetting procedures so the public, government and industry receive the appropriate service and advice. MLA members share the ethos that 'skill and integrity' remain paramount in locksmithing and are able to provide sound advice based on knowledge and experience.

A list of approved MLA companies are listed on the MLA website, for further information please visit: www.locksmiths.co.uk

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