



Rogue 'locksmith' sentenced to four years behind bars

Master Locksmiths Association helps bring about conviction

In what was one of the worst cases of fraud Trading Standards have ever seen, former 'locksmith' Mark Makowski is facing the start of a four year sentence behind bars. As Westminster City Council, Westminster Trading Standards and the Master Locksmiths Association see their hard work in bringing the case to court, come to fruition.

Sentenced today (31 August 2010) at the Old Bailey, Makowski was given a three and a half years prison sentence after being found guilty of 15 counts of fraud which cost members of the public thousands of pounds. Makowski – who has previously been investigated by BBC's Rogue Traders – received a further six months for committing an offence whilst on bail.

At the trial on 22 July 2010, the jury ruled Makowski was responsible for installing inferior products, breaking down doors, replacing locks unnecessarily, miss-quoting, over-charging and operating under a number of company names. The case is the biggest brought against a 'locksmith' in Trading Standards' history.

Makowski had operated as an emergency locksmith trading as Pronto Locks Limited, based in New Cavendish Street, West London but he was actually based in Herts and operating across the South East. At today's sentencing Makowski was banned from being a company director for five years.

At the sentencing Judge Anthony Morris told him: "The work you did was frequently incompetently executed. I doubt you have the skill even to be described as a locksmith."

Speaking about the sentence Dr Steffan George from the Master Locksmiths Association said: "One of our members Ron Cliff was an expert witness for Westminster Trading Standards so we are thrilled to hear today's sentence. People like Makowski give the locksmithing profession a bad name and we are pleased to see that he has received a long

prison sentence that shows rogue individuals like him won't get away with taking advantage of the public.

"Locksmiths like our members are doing a great job for customers on a daily basis but unfortunately there are a handful of individuals out there who do dent the reputation of our profession. Thanks to the hard work of Westminster Council, Westminster Trading Standards and our expert witness it's great to see justice has been done today and other rogue traders know this behaviour is not acceptable."

Trading Standards presented three years worth of evidence throughout the five week trial to bring the case to court in July – evidence included two sting operations by Trading Standards officers. Makowski had been operating under a number of different company names over the period of investigation.

One victim from London was quoted £128 to open her door after becoming locked out but ended up receiving a bill for £462 for just 45 minutes work in April 2007. Another was charged £1,160 for replacing two locks which had to be replaced a few days later at a cost of only £154.

Sue Jones, Head of Trading Standards said: "We are delighted that justice has finally caught up with this trader, who charged his customers large sums of money for a very poor quality and often totally unnecessary work. We hope the fact that his activity was proved to be fraudulent sends out a clear message to other traders who may be tempted to behave in this way.

"This has been a lengthy case and involved a lot of hard work both by Westminster Trading Standards and our colleagues in the Trading Standards Regional Fraud Unit who have been of great assistance".

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 on 0191 265 7765 or email hayley@karolmarketing.com

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. 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