

Customer statement: impersonation by fraudsters

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We are writing to advise our customers that there have been recent instances of a group of fraudsters targeting hospitality businesses, including Bidfood customers, via an e-mail scam to solicit payments.

Initially the group were operating the scam in other countries, but there is now evidence that they are targeting businesses in the UK. We take matters of customer security extremely seriously and are warning all our customers so that they can protect themselves from this fraud.

The modus operandi

As an example, the fraudsters have been sending out e-mails from false Bidfood e-mail address (for example, mark@bidfood-uk.com or mark@bidfood-uk.co.uk), signed from a Regional Sales Manager named Mark Hewitt. This is an alias and not an employee of Bidfood.

The e-mail content offers bogus deals and promotions on catering equipment (for example, ovens, gas cookers, sinks, fridges, freezers etc.) or alcohol products (for example, various brands of vodka, gin, rum, liqueurs) along with wording along the lines of:

***“On behalf of bidfood we are inquiring to see if you would be interested in some of our available stock for sale. Due to a decline in business we are looking to sell off our kitchen equipment and a large selection of wines and spirits from our warehouse due to HMRC regulations we require business to business sales. We are open for discussion on any reasonable offers along with free delivery with our dispatch services.*”**

We hope to hear from you soon, If you have any interest in any stock please don't hesitate to email us any questions.”

The e-mail may feature an incorrect Bidfood logo (not the correct logo shown above which includes our ‘Inspired by you’ strapline).

A mobile number is given under the false signature of Mark Hewitt. Fraudsters will answer the phone and impersonate a Bidfood employee to give an impression of legitimacy, if the number is called.

The scam aims to initiate an order from the recipient. When an order is placed, a fake Bidfood invoice with details of a non-Bidfood account is sent. Once payment is made, the goods fail to turn up.

Please note that the fraudsters may change their wording, promotions, e-mail addresses etc., so please consider the details above as an example.

Our advice to you

The fraud attempts could involve a sales/marketing offer from someone other than your usual Bidfood contact. We have made no changes to how we contact customers. If you are unsure about the legitimacy or authenticity of any communications you receive, then we are asking you to:

- 1) Please get in touch with your normal Bidfood contact**
- 2) Do not respond to the email or phone the number in that e-mail.**

We would also strongly advise you to keep any record of fraudulent communications you receive and report this as a crime with your local police, as well as Action Fraud.

Whilst this matter is outside of our control, and we are unfortunately unable to register this as a crime ourselves, we are keen to understand how these fraudsters are operating, so it would be a great help if you can **send us a copy of any e-mails you may receive***, **any other evidence (for example invoices) or any crime reference numbers** should you register the fraud with the police or Action Fraud. This will help us monitor their modus operandi and collate any evidence to bring to the attention of the police if fraudsters target other customers on a wider scale.

*N.B Please attach a copy of any e-mails rather than forward them as it allows us to glean more information.

If you have information to share with us about this matter, please send it to: ContractsTeam@bidfood.co.uk.

What actions are Bidfood taking?

We take matters affecting our customers' security incredibly seriously, and are working hard to identify and close down fake domains that fraudsters can use to target hospitality businesses and to closely monitor the scam.

We are also contacting customers to ensure they are aware of the scam and collating evidence to share with regional police crime units.

We have briefed our teams about this issue, so if you have any queries about communications you've received, please contact them in the first instance to check their legitimacy. If you have any further queries or information to share, please contact **ContractsTeam@bidfood.co.uk**.

We'd like to thank you all in advance for your cooperation and understanding at this time.

Best Regards

Alison Brogan, CFO, Bidfood UK