

NEWS RELEASE

Chips are down for Copyright Cheats

A joint operation between West Yorkshire Trading Standards Service and West Yorkshire Police has unearthed the largest ever UK haul of equipment involved in the 'chipping' of games consoles.

'Chipping' is the process that enables copied games to be played on consoles such as the Nintendo Wii and Microsoft Xbox 360.

The discovery, from a residential property in Halifax, came about after a raid on the town's car boot sale. At the house, officers discovered over 500 games consoles with a retail value of over £125,000, after a 23 year-old man was arrested at the market earlier in the day. Computers, the chips themselves and a substantial amount of cash were also seized from the property.

The original operation at the market had resulted in two further individuals being arrested for selling copied DVDs and CDs. A total of over 5000 discs were seized with a retail value of over £50,000.

A full investigation is now underway which will include forensic examination of the equipment seized.

Graham Hebblethwaite, Chief Officer of West Yorkshire Trading Standards Service, said: "Copyright crime is driven by greed and causes a loss of millions of pounds to the retailers of West Yorkshire and to members of the music and entertainment industry every year. The haul of items from this operation should send out a clear warning to individuals involved in the illegal copyright industry that they will be dealt with severely. This sort of crime carries a maximum sentence of ten years imprisonment".

Councillor Geoff Driver, of the Trading Standards Committee, added: "This service is determined to strike hard against individuals involved in this illegal industry. We will continue to work closely with the Police and Industry bodies to ensure that these activities are stamped out. If anybody has more information about this illegal activity then they should contact Consumer Direct on 08454 040506".

Michael Rawlinson, Managing Director of ELSPA (Entertainment & Leisure Software Publishers Association), commented: "I congratulate West Yorkshire Trading Standards and West Yorkshire Police for what stands as a landmark seizure of chipped consoles and illegally copied discs. The scale of the operation and the removal of the counterfeit material from the market place will have an immediate impact on local businesses in the area".

Acting Sergeant Louise Holbrook, of the Halifax Town Centre Neighbourhood Policing Team, said: "The arrests and seizures here show that West Yorkshire Police is committed to tackling this and all types of crime. The operation is a good example of partnership work achieving results that should act as a warning to criminals across the region".

Calderdale Council Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Development, David Kirton, said: "We are delighted by the outcome of this multi-agency operation. It reinforces the Council's commitment to keeping our markets free of dishonest traders and hopefully the results of this operation will send a clear message that they are not welcome in Calderdale. It also underlines our on-going proactive approach to maintaining a healthy, honest and vibrant trading platform for all our markets and making sure shoppers and traders are able to continue their business with confidence".

EDITORS NOTES-

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE SEIZURE CAN BE CARRIED OUT THIS WEEK ONLY AT THE WYTSS COMPLEX.

For more information, please contact Paul Smith - Principal Officer, Fair Trading 0113 289 8219

Please find a photo attached of Paul Smith, Principal Officer of Fair Trading team

