

Press release

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Hackney campaign takes 18 pirate radio stations off air

An ongoing campaign against pirate radio in Hackney has led to 18 illegal operators being taken off air over the past month.

The operation was partnership between local police, Hackney Council, Hackney Homes and the Office of Communications (Ofcom).

According to Keith Veness of Hackney Homes' Estate Safety Team who work to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour on housing estates, pirate radio presents a number of problems on estates.

"Obviously pirate radio is illegal and while it is a nuisance for residents trying to listen to legitimate radio stations and can be quite noisy, it is far more serious than that," Keith said.

"There is a strong link between pirate radio and crime. In many cases the pirate radio station is used to sell drugs and warn of drug raids.

"The transmitters used can also be large in size and are not only ugly to look at but also a significant danger to residents if they fall from the roof.

"Since our campaign started we've found operators have resorted to hiding transmitters in the building, often in the ventilation ducts. This can cause big problems especially as the weather warms up."

Although the campaign has successfully taken 18 pirate radio stations off air in the last month, Keith says it is an ongoing problem that needs to be addressed.

"Repeat offences are quite common with pirate radio, but we have a zero tolerance policy and will keep shutting these operators and taking away their expensive equipment. Each time we shut them down it makes it harder for them to start up again."

And it seems the Estate Safety Team is on the look out for pirate radio, even out of work hours.

"Most of our team catch the bus to work and the top deck of the bus is an excellent place to look out for transmitters. The hilly landscape makes it very easy for us to spot them and take action."

Operators of pirate radio face criminal prosecution and a possible jail sentence. All equipment is confiscated and if they are a tenant of Hackney Homes they can lose their tenancy as well.

Ends

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