



Bogus scrap metal cargo offers worry recycling industry

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* Identities of real metal traders were cloned

* Websites of metal trading and shipping firms were copied

NEW YORK, Jan 23 (Reuters) - Recyclers are being offered scrap metal at prices too good to be true - since the cargoes have turned out to be nonexistent and the sellers are con artists posing as legitimate traders, the Bureau of International Recycling said this week.

BIR, the largest international recycling association, said several cases were reported in the last few weeks where cargoes of scrap metal were offered to member companies at knock-down prices.

These offers were accompanied by documents that confirmed the quality of the material on offer but that later proved inauthentic.

"The offers were quite frequently made in the name of real traders, whose identities were cloned for fraudulent purposes," BIR said in a statement.

"One strategy seemed to be the creation of a new website with a domain name similar to that of the genuine company, featuring its contact details but with different telephone numbers."

The International Maritime Bureau found out that at least one of these numbers was used for multiple companies and that emails that appeared to be from a UK-based company were actually generated in Nigeria.

Major carriers' websites were also cloned to provide convincing tracking facilities.

Once customers hand over funds, there is very little they can do to recover the loss since law enforcement officials will not intervene without proof that a crime has taken place in their jurisdiction, BIR said. It urged members to report cases to the association to manage risk.

Besides the scrap metal industry, BIR represents plastic paper, rubber and textiles recyclers and has a total of more than 850 private members.

(Reporting by Silvia Antonioli; Editing by Lisa Von Ahn)