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City residents offered vastly reduced aftershave and perfume in the run up to Christmas are being urged to be aware after safety fears.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Trading Standards say unlicensed street traders are operating illegally in the city and have so far seized 500 bottles of counterfeit designer fragrance in eight weeks.

They say that members of the public are being approached by children and young men selling counterfeit designer fragrances such as Chanel, Hugo Boss and DKNY at vastly reduced prices.

The items are usually produced from a plastic bag or coat pocket and while at first glance they look genuine, all examples have been confirmed as counterfeit.

Previously tested counterfeit aftershaves and perfumes have been found to contain excessive amounts of methanol amongst other ingredients. High levels of methanol can cause skin conditions in the form of rashes and reactions to consumers especially those with sensitive skin or dermatitis. Another safety consideration is that high levels of methanol makes the perfume much more flammable.

Officers will now be taking enforcement action against the traders involved and all perfume will be destroyed.

Rob Edmunds, trading standards officer, said: "Despite a number of seizures in the city over the past eight weeks, we're concerned these unlicensed street traders could return to capitalise on the Christmas shopping period.

"We're urging members of the public to be aware of sellers offering designer fragrances at too good to be true prices."