



SELLING PRECIOUS METAL JEWELLERY IN THE UK

Businesses who wish to sell precious metal jewellery, ie Platinum, Gold or Silver in the UK must follow the rules laid out by law in the Hallmarking Act 1973. If these rules are not followed Trading Standards Officers have the right to seize goods immediately and the seller is committing an illegal act.

There are three important rules:

1. Minimum Fineness

The law requires that if any item is to be described and sold as Gold, Silver or Platinum it must meet a minimum standard or "fineness" which is expressed in parts per thousand. For example, the minimum quantity of precious metal in the alloy of an article described as 9ct Gold must be 375 parts per thousand. The minimum quantity of silver in items described as Sterling Silver must be at least 925 parts per thousand.

2. A Compulsory Hallmark

If the item is over a certain weight, the fineness must also be checked by an independent Assay Office and the item hallmarked with the relevant information to show the customer that the item is of the specified fineness before being offered for sale.

The weight thresholds are:

Gold - over 1 gram

Silver - over 7.78 grams

Platinum over 0.5 grams

Palladium over 1 gram will need to be hallmarked from January 2010

A UK Hallmark consists of three compulsory symbols:

- **A Sponsor's Mark**, a mark indicative and unique to the business submitting the article for hallmarking
- **A Fineness Mark** – the purity of the precious metal content, for example, sterling silver is 925 parts silver per thousand parts by weight. The Fineness Mark for Sterling Silver therefore is 925
- **The Assay Office Mark** – this is the mark of The UK Assay Office at which the hallmark has been struck, in the case of The Birmingham Assay Office, this is an Anchor.
- NB Where a manufacturer has marked a fineness, such as 925 into their jewellery this is **not** a substitute for a UK hallmark.

3. Dealer Notices

It is also a requirement for traders in precious metals to display a Dealer's Notice, which explains what the hallmark means, in a prominent position at their place of trading. Dealer's Notices can be obtained from The Birmingham Assay Office at a cost of £10.00 including VAT and postage and packing.

For further information contact:

Marie Brennan
Business Relations Manager

Kathy McMillan
Operations Manager

Lin Moran
Registration Co-ordinator

The Birmingham Assay Office
PO Box 151, Newhall Street
Birmingham B3 1SB
T: 0121 236 6951 F: 0121 236 9032
E: info@theassayoffice.co.uk
www.theassayoffice.co.uk

July 2008