

SCAMS REPORT
MILTON TOWNSHIP S.A.L.T. COUNCIL MEETING OCTOBER 12, 2021

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Professional License Suspension Scam

Scammers have recently devised a scam that targets individuals requiring a license to operate. These victims are typically higher-income earners and include those in the medical, teaching, counseling, accounting, banking, and real estate sectors.

How it works: You receive a telephone call, email, or text message from someone claiming to be an investigator from the state's licensing board for your profession. Some callers claim to represent a federal agency such as the FBI or the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

You're told that your license is at risk of being suspended and that you will receive an "official" notification letter from the state licensing department that explains everything. The letter with your license number and expiration date arrives as promised and informs you that your bank account has been associated with a drug trafficking or money-laundering operation involving an international smuggling ring. You're asked to confirm your personal information to verify the agency has the right individual.

The letter states that you have two options: 1) purchase a federal treasury bond that will permit you to remain free pending trial or 2) face imprisonment as you await trial. The letter states that if you decide to purchase a bond, the money should be sent by wire transfer. The letter also states that you can apply to have your license reinstated without any encumbrances if you purchase a bond. You're told not to discuss the matter with anyone because it's being kept confidential.

Here's what's happening: Your professional license is not in jeopardy. The scammer was "phishing" to try and steal your personal information and your money. If you pay for the "bond" as instructed, the money is lost. If you provide the requested personal information, the scammer can steal your identity, withdraw funds from your account, and purchase expensive items and charge them to you. Your personal information will be sold to other criminals.

How to protect yourself:

- If you receive a communication from a governmental agency threatening the status of your license, contact the appropriate licensing agency to determine if there is actually an issue with your license. In Illinois, this agency may be the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulations (IDFPR). Be sure to use the agency's contact information obtained by you and not information that was given to you by someone else. Cease all further contact with "agents" who try to contact you.
- Professional license numbers and expiration dates are available to anyone on the internet. In Illinois, this information is available on the IDFPR website. Thus, simply because the "official" notification letter contains your professional license number and expiration date does not indicate that the drug trafficking or money-laundering charges are valid.
- State licensing bureaus will never call or send an email threatening arrest if you don't send money. These agencies communicate via the US Mail unless you initiate the contact in another way.
- Do not remit payment by debit card, gift card, or wire transfer. If you're told payment MUST be made this way, you are dealing with a scammer. The money is lost once payment is made and cannot be recovered.
- If you're told not to discuss this situation with anybody, you're dealing with a scammer who is trying to "isolate" you to prevent family and friends from intervening and giving you advice.
- Never provide your personal or financial information (e.g., SSN, DOB, bank account numbers) to anyone until you verify the individual has a legitimate need for the information.
- If you are a victim of this scam, report it to the following agencies:
 - Your local police department
 - Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) at www.ic3.gov www.ftc.gov
 - Federal Trade Commission at www.ftc.gov

[Resource: ABC]