



CONSUMER NEWS

SAN DIEGO CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Using Online Employment Resources Safely & Securely

Part 2 of a 2 part series on Safe Job Searches

September 2013

Last month, we offered some tips for using online employment resources safely and securely. Specifically, we outlined three simple rules for staying safe online. First, protect your personal information. Second, research the company you're applying to. Finally, avoid upfront fees. For more information on these rules, please refer to last month's newsletter. This month, we'll take a look at some online job scams common to the San Diego area.

RULE #1: IF IT'S TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, IT PROBABLY IS

When it comes to searching for jobs online, it's best to apply the old adage, "if it's too good to be true, it probably is." Many online job scams involve postings that promise lucrative positions involving very little work. For instance, clever con artists have recently targeted the San Diego area with "payment processing" and "package shipper" schemes. Both of these positions allow the job seeker to work from home and make their own hours. Of course, this is very attractive proposition. However, performing the duties of these jobs can leave you on the wrong side of the law, and with an empty wallet.

Payment processing positions involve the employer sending the employee a check or money order that is fraudulent or counterfeit.

The employer also encloses a letter instructing the employee to wire 90 percent of the funds to a third party, often overseas, and keep the remaining 10 percent as compensation. These scams are usually an attempt to lure the employee into a check fraud or money laundering operation. Shortly after the employee cashes or deposits the check or money order, the bank will notify them that it was fraudulent or counterfeit. The employee is then responsible for replacing the funds that they wired overseas, and is also an unwitting accomplice to check fraud or money laundering.

Package shipper positions are very similar. However, instead of cashing or depositing checks or money orders, they involve re-shipping packages that the employer sends to the employee. The employer sends the employee a package, along with instructions to ship that package to a third party, usually overseas. The employee is told to use the enclosed funds to pay for shipping and to keep what's left as compensation. Generally, these positions are an attempt to lure the unsuspecting employee into receiving and shipping stolen goods.

Since payment processing and package shipping scams often originate overseas, a good way to identify them is to check the posting for obvious errors in

spelling or grammar. A legitimate employer will usually proof-read a job posting carefully before they publish it online. Postings by offshore con artists, on the other hand, will often be riddled with typographical and grammatical errors.

RULE #2: FAKE CHARITY JOBS

Postings for fake charity jobs are another type of scam that has popped up recently in San Diego. In this scheme, unscrupulous employers use the names of legitimate charities to trick unsuspecting job seekers into handing over all of their personal information. These postings promise twenty dollars an hour or more to drive trucks for prominent non-profit organizations. The prospective employer then schedules an interview with the job seeker at an informal, offsite location like a coffee shop or restaurant. The job seeker is instructed to bring copies of their driver's license, passport, birth certificate, and social security card to this interview, under the guise of obtaining the proper credentials to drive for the charity. However, after handing over these documents, the job seeker soon becomes an identity theft victim, rather than a charity driver.

Therefore, always verify the posting with the charity it claims to represent by calling them and

inquiring about the job. If the charity is unaware of the posting, it's almost certainly a scam. This also lets the charity know that someone is misusing their name, so that they can take action against the scammer. Additionally, be wary about meeting prospective employers at cafes and restaurants. Most legitimate employers will conduct interviews in their offices or over the phone rather than at informal, offsite locations.

CONCLUSION

In summary, always practice the three basic rules of online job searching that were discussed in last month's newsletter. Additionally, be on the lookout for payment processing and package shipping postings, since these are almost always scams. Also, verify any posting advertising a charity job with the charity itself, since this burgeoning scam seems to be gaining momentum in San Diego. And remember, if it seems too good to be true, it probably is. Therefore, approach every online job posting with a discerning eye. By following these steps, you'll be able to search for jobs online safely, securely, and effectively.

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The information provided in this newsletter is intended to convey general information and is not intended to be relied upon as legal advice.

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The San Diego City Attorney's Consumer & Environmental Protection Unit prosecutes criminal and civil violations of California's unfair competition and other consumer laws committed in the City of San Diego. The Unit maintains a Phone Hotline for consumers to report possible violations. You can reach the Hotline at **(619) 533-5600**.