

State Call Center Managers:

4/11/06

We recently detected a scam being perpetuated on us by several persons unknown and would like to warn you in case they attempt the scam on your state UI call center as well. According to our system data these individuals were all calling from the same phone number in Virginia (703-554-6028). We have also received these same types of scam calls from (703) 797-2022, (360) 635-5596 and (360) 633-1182.

The callers typically provide some excuse for needing to find out what state their wages are being reported in, provide an SSN to check, and specify one to three states. Once we've located wages in a state they want the employer name and address. Once obtained, they cannot complete the call fast enough (obviously got what they wanted!). When they do provide an employer name in response to our questions, it is never in the base in any of the states.

We can only speculate as to why they want this SSN-specific employer address information, but some possibilities are:

Bill collectors would use this to serve a garnishment.

Skip tracers (or bail bondsmen) could use this to track down the person at their place of employment.

Private investigators may have been hired to find the person (particularly disconcerting knowing it could be a domestic abuse situation).

Data-miners collecting confidential information for resale.

Identity theft rings could use this employment information for credit applications or other ways to get goods/money under another person's name.

This information could be used to "build" a false identity for purposes unknown.

This could be used to create fraudulent UI claims (get wage information and employer specifics, then combine with other, possibly false, employment in the state of residence & file bogus CWC claims).

While there may be other possibilities, the point is that the state should protect itself from being victimized by this scam. The information is confidential and these parties are using criminal impersonation to obtain confidential information. This is a clear violation of national privacy law as well as state confidentiality provisions. If one group has discovered this "information-avenue", it is highly likely others will too.

Colorado is being proactive in shutting this door by refusing to provide specific employer information to callers unless they want to file a claim. We are encouraging other states to follow suit and tighten up the release of such information. These parties will soon realize the door has been closed. We know, for fact, that other states are being victimized by this scam. On one call recording I detected an IVR interaction taking place in the background while we had the caller on hold. This turned out to be another state UI IVR system on speaker phone, with a different SSN being input than the one our caller was using! I attached a one-page handout I developed for our staff to help them recognize these types of scam calls. Feel free to use or adapt it to your needs.

If you have any questions about these calls or the information shared here, please feel free to contact me.

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