



Date: December 18, 2020

Department of Real Estate Warns Licensees About New Scam

Scammers pretend to be DRE employees and demand payments

SACRAMENTO – The Department of Real Estate (DRE) is alerting its licensees about a scam that already has targeted some real estate brokers and salespersons.

As part of the scheme, scammers are identifying themselves as DRE investigators or staff members who then notify the licensees that they are under investigation, or subject to a citation or other disciplinary action, and must pay DRE to clear their license. They will demand that you wire them money. They say it will go to DRE, but it actually ends up in the hands of the scammers.

In some instances, the scammers may identify themselves as law enforcement and make similar demands. The scammers may be “spoofing” DRE telephone numbers to make the calls seem legitimate.

In at least one instance, a licensee was contacted by a person claiming to be a DRE employee who advised them that they had to pay a fine for an instance of forgery DRE found. The scammer then directed the licensee to go to a money transmitter and wire payment immediately. The licensee went to do that. Luckily, they were stopped by an alert money transmitter, who advised them, it was likely a scam.

To avoid becoming a victim of this type of scam, DRE wants you to know that:

- DRE staff will **never** contact you and demand money or payment without a formal administrative action being filed against you. If your license is subject to discipline, DRE will send you a formal document – such as an accusation or citation - via certified mail to the address you have on-record with DRE;
- DRE will **never** ask or require you to wire money to us;
- If you do have a fine or penalty payment to make to DRE, the payee **must** be the Department of Real Estate. You will **never** make a DRE payment to an individual;

- If you receive an email or telephone call from a person claiming to be a DRE staff member and you are unsure, do not provide them with any personal information. Contact DRE call center at 1-877-373-4542 and follow the prompts to speak to an investigator. DRE will be able to confirm whether or not the person contacting you is indeed a DRE employee;

If the phone number of the caller appears to be a DRE number, you should report the scam to the Federal Communications Commission; <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov/hc/en-us/articles/115002234203-Unwanted-Calls-Phone->

If you are able to confirm that the person calling you is a scammer, please contact your local law enforcement agency to report the crime.

The California Department of Real Estate (DRE) was established in 1917 to safeguard and promote the public interests in real estate matters through licensure, regulation, education and enforcement. Today, DRE licenses more than 441,000 salespersons, brokers and officers.

###