

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Northern District of Oklahoma

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, June 29, 2020

Nearly 3,800 Fraudulently Filed Unemployment Insurance Claims Blocked by the U. S. Department of Labor

U.S. Attorney and Oklahoma Attorney General Encourage Oklahomans to Report False Claims Filed in their Name

The U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General (DOL-OIG) in collaboration with the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) this month stopped payment on nearly 3,800 fraudulently filed unemployment insurance claims, including 1,300 filed from a range of IP addresses located in London, England, announced Trent Shores, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Oklahoma; Steven Grell, Special Agent-in-Charge, Dallas Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General; and Mike Hunter, Oklahoma Attorney General.

The DOL-OIG and OESC took action that saved the State of Oklahoma and tax payers more than \$15.9 million.

“Where there is crisis, criminals see opportunity. Fraudsters won’t hesitate to fill their pockets with money intended for hard working Oklahomans who have lost their jobs during this current health crisis,” said U.S. Attorney Trent Shores. “My Coronavirus Anti-Fraud Team will continue to partner with the Oklahoma Attorney General’s Office, the U.S. Department of Labor, and local, state, tribal and federal law enforcement to investigate and shut down these unscrupulous networks.”

“The Office of Inspector General is committed to safeguarding the Unemployment Insurance program on behalf of taxpayers and vulnerable Americans in need of assistance. We will continue to work vigorously alongside our law enforcement and state workforce agency partners to pursue criminals who seek to exploit the Unemployment Insurance program for personal gain,” said Steven Grell, Special Agent-in-Charge, Dallas Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General.

“I am proud of the efficiency at which the task force has worked since being formed,” said Attorney General Mike Hunter. “Although we have accomplished a lot in a short period of time, there is much more to be done, which includes finding those responsible and holding them accountable. I look forward to continuing this important work with the other agencies involved as we remain focused on the best interests of Oklahomans.”

The Department took action to block the London IP addresses and several other foreign IP addresses from accessing and fraudulently filing claims through the OESC. Additionally, investigators located businesses regularly named by fraudsters when filing the fraudulent claims. For example, 2,450 unemployment claims were filed naming one Oklahoma business as the employer, but in actuality, the business employs fewer than 10 employees. The business along with multiple individuals whose names were fraudulently used to file the claims reside in the Northern District of Oklahoma.

In order to stop these fraudsters, U.S. Attorney Shores and Attorney General Hunter encourage Oklahomans to report any unemployment notices they receive from the OESC that were filed fraudulently in their names.

If you or a family member receive a notice about unemployment insurance benefits from the OESC and/or a prepaid MasterCard debit card for Oklahoma unemployment insurance benefits, and it is related to a fraudulent application, please do the following:

1. Scan and save the documents containing the OESC notice and the debit card, if you receive a card.
2. Complete an electronic complaint form and upload required documents at: <https://my.ok.gov/Forms/Report%20Unemployment%20Fraud>
3. Order a free credit report from www.annualcreditreport.com and consider freezing your credit.

The U.S. Attorney's Office, DOL-OIG, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations, Oklahoma Attorney General's Office, Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation, and OESC continue their ongoing collaborative efforts to address online fraud schemes in order to prevent the loss of taxpayer dollars.

For more information about COVID-19 fraud, visit the Justice Department's website at <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus> or the Oklahoma Attorney General's website at <http://www.oag.ok.gov/coronavirus-fraud-resources>.