



Department of Justice

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State and Federal Officials Urge Mainers to Report Unemployment Fraud

PORTLAND, Maine: United States Attorney Halsey B. Frank, Maine Attorney General Aaron Frey and Maine Commissioner of Labor Laura Fortman warned that scammers are taking advantage of pandemic unemployment assistance programs to file fraudulent claims by using the personal information of other people, including Maine residents. They urged Mainers to notify the Maine Department of Labor if they believe that someone has used their identity to fraudulently apply for or obtain unemployment benefits. The online complaint form is at <https://www.maine.gov/unemployment/idtheft/>

The U.S. Attorney's Office, Maine Department of Labor, Maine Attorney General's Office, Maine State Police, Maine State Treasurer, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, U.S. Secret Service, Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations and the FBI are working together to investigate and stop the fraudulent unemployment claims. In Maine, the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General are spearheading the federal investigative effort.

"Although perhaps not surprising, it is outrageous that criminals are capitalizing on the current emergency to file fraudulent unemployment claims using stolen identity information," said U.S. Attorney Frank. "The U.S. Attorney's Office is working closely with our state and federal partners to identify and halt this criminal behavior, and to bring to justice those who commit it. We ask anyone who believes they have been the victim of unemployment fraud to report it immediately."

Maine Attorney General Frey added, "We will work with the Department of Labor to stop public funds from being released due to fraud, and we will coordinate with the U.S. Attorney's Office on the prosecution of those individuals who apply for or obtain public funds using stolen identities."

"The U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General is committed to ensuring the integrity of the unemployment insurance program. The CARES Act provides enhanced unemployment benefits during these unprecedented times. The Office of Inspector General will

work closely with the U.S. Department of Justice, Maine Department of Labor, and our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners to vigorously pursue those who seek to exploit the unemployment benefits our nation is providing to our fellow citizens in their time of need,” stated Michael Mikulka, Special Agent-in-Charge, New York Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General.

With the unprecedented increase in unemployment insurance claims over the past two months due to COVID-19, many states, including Maine, are seeing an increase in reports of identity theft in applications for unemployment benefits. Victims often discover that their personal information has been stolen only when they file an application for benefits and learn that claims have already been submitted using their name and personal information.

“The Maine Department of Labor takes its responsibility to uphold the integrity of the unemployment program very seriously,” Commissioner Laura Fortman said. “MDOL will continue to work with our federal and state law enforcement partners to investigate and prevent fraud, while paying benefits to eligible Maine workers as quickly as possible.”

In addition to creating a state-federal task force to detect and prevent fraud, MDOL has taken the following additional steps:

- Coordinating with financial institutions to identify suspicious accounts;
- Reviewing system changes needed to increase fraud detection; and
- Blocking web addresses linked to fraud here in Maine and in other states.

If you believe that someone else has used your information to file a fraudulent unemployment application, please notify the Maine Department of Labor immediately at <https://www.maine.gov/unemployment/idtheft/>. Suspected fraud can also be reported to the National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline at <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form> or (866) 720-5721.

If you think someone is using your personal information to open accounts, file taxes or make purchases, visit <https://www.identitytheft.gov> to report and recover from identity theft. Additional identity theft resources can be found at https://www.maine.gov/ag/privacy/identity_theft.shtml or <https://www.ftc.gov/faq/consumer-protection/report-identity-theft>.

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