

WIRE FRAUD

"I never thought it would happen to me!"



THERE HAS BEEN A RESURGENCE OF AGENTS FALLING VICTIM TO INSTANCES OF WIRE FRAUD.

In interviewing the affected agents, the responses have a number of common themes:

"I never thought it would happen to me."

"I knew the risks, but hadn't adequately communicated to or implemented processes for my front line people."

"I've communicated with the employees about these risks; the First American Title flyer is up in our lunchroom, but they sent the wire anyway."

Falling victim to a wire fraud scheme or related fraud can be financially devastating to agents and their business relationships.

Make sure you are insured properly against these risks and know that a fraud attempt can, and likely will at some point, be made against your business.

Communicate with your employees loudly and often about these risks and establish procedures and protocols to guard against failures.

Help protect your agency by keeping these helpful tips near the desk of everyone in your office:



Wire and other disbursement instructions received by email should be confirmed by telephone at a known or independently-confirmed number, **NOT** the telephone number at the bottom of the email you are trying to confirm.



Be especially skeptical of any change in disbursement instructions. Who really changes their wire instructions that frequently?



Confirm the account to which you are wiring is in the name of the party entitled to the funds.



Consider providing YOUR wire instructions to your customers via hard copy only, with a notation: *With cyber crimes on the increase, it is important to be ever-vigilant. If you receive an email, or any other communication that appears to be generated from our office, containing new, revised or altered bank wire instructions, consider it suspect and call our office at a number you trust. Our bank wire instructions seldom change.*



Be leery of a new deal coming to your office out of nowhere. Example: *"I have a sales contract and a deposit for property I am purchasing, and I was referred to your office. Will your office act as title and settlement agent for my transaction?"* This conversation is typically followed by a subsequent request to wire out funds originally deposited by check.



Be suspicious of emails from free, public email account domains as they are often a source of risk.



Watch out for phishing emails with embedded links, even when they appear to come from a trusted source.

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