

WI Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: Don't 'Hangout' with fake job scammers

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MADISON – Job seekers beware: scammers may use invitations to discuss employment opportunities on Google Hangout as a way to get you to turn over sensitive personal or financial information. If you receive a similar unsolicited contact, stop communications immediately.

Fake work-from-home pitches often start via message boards and classified ad sites or through unsolicited emails from phony recruiters. Scammers use the names of well-known businesses, and the scammer may even impersonate a senior-level employee or executive from the company.

The scammer will ask the potential victim to interview over an instant messaging platform or using Google Hangouts, a service that allows Google account holders to send direct messages, join a group chat, or make voice or video calls. After an "interview," the scammer asks for personal information under the false pretense of making a job offer or ordering a background or drug test.

If you receive an unsolicited job offer from someone claiming to represent a legitimate business, do some research and contact the business directly to inquire.

Be suspicious of job prospects that are sent to you from a personal email address (like a gmail.com address) and of requests to chat via Google Hangouts or another instant message platform.

Additional tips to protect against job interview fraud:

-Many fake job interview offers float around by text message and email, so be suspicious of any unsolicited employment-related contact that you receive. You may wish to flag the message as spam and block the account from future communications if possible.

-If you post your resume on a job site, check whether your information is public or private and adjust the security settings to meet your needs.

-Watch for “interviews” where you are immediately offered a job without consideration of your education, experiences and background.

-Remember that the person contacting you may know some details about the business they are claiming to represent.

For additional information, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at <http://datcp.wisconsin.gov>, send an e-mail to datcphotline@wisconsin.gov or call the Consumer Protection Hotline at 1-800-422-7128.

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