

Dept. of Workforce Development: Detects, prevents approximately 350 instances of identity-fraud against UI program

Posted on Tuesday, May 19, 2020

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MADISON – As national news outlets report widespread fraudulent attacks on state unemployment systems, the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) today announced its continued diligence in detecting and preventing fraud and shared how the public can assist in its efforts.

DWD has identified 342 unsuccessful attempts to access the system with a stolen social security number as of May 15. Out of the 1.4 million claims totaling more than \$1.1 billion that the Department has paid since March 15, DWD has flagged 171 claims as potential fraud with payments estimated to be around \$26,000.

“While we are relieved that we have not experienced the same level of attacks as some other states and are proud that Wisconsin has been a leader at detecting fraud, DWD remains committed to taking all appropriate steps to prevent fraud against our UI system,” Secretary Caleb Frostman said. “During a time when so many are experiencing joblessness, it is unfortunate that some individuals are trying to take advantage of the crisis by committing fraud not only against the state, but our fellow Wisconsinites. “

The instances of fraud that began in late March involve an individual using another’s identity in an attempt to claim benefits on their behalf. The bad actors have stolen personal information from sources outside of the agency, such as from massive external data breaches like the Equifax breach, and then use it to apply for benefits and attempt to route those payments to their own bank accounts. DWD’s

anti-fraud team recognizes this imposter fraud from past attacks on the system.

“While DWD has a litany of tools at its disposal to detect fraud against the program and will continue to diligently defend the UI trust fund,” Frostman said, “we ask for the public’s assistance in reporting any suspected instances of fraud, such as if you receive mail incorrectly indicating you have applied for UI benefits.”

The public can learn more about how to recognize and report suspected fraud at <https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/ui/fraud/>.

“DWD is working tirelessly to quickly get UI benefits out to those who need them,” Frostman said. “We must combat fraudulent activities so we may pay out legitimate claims and block those who seek to do harm.”