Spotting Job Scams

Suzan Reagan, Labor Market Information Webmaster

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Current tough economic situations are worrying enough! And if you are looking for employment for the first time in several years, you will need to do some research on job hunting issues. Not only do job hunters need to be prepared to put their best face forward to find that new employment opportunity, but they also need to keep an eye out for dubious offers.

In the past we have seen job hunters targeted with e-mail messages identifying the sender as associated with a state job bank. The e-mail directs the seeker to sign up at false websites or requests financial information or money. These are often schemes aimed at identity theft and/or taking money from your bank account.

More worrying than the typical spam e-mail, which can often be discarded because it makes outrageous claims, is a change in tactics of posted jobs on job boards. Noted in The Wall Street Journal February 17, 2009, article It Isn’t Always a Job Behind an Online Job Posting, “What may look like an ad for employment may lead to something entirely different, like a hard sell for career services or job-training manuals.” You can answer a job posting and be invited to do an interview. Then the interview will turn into a sales pitch. Remember that you always have the option to leave. Never be rushed into signing a contract. High-pressure sales tactics are used to get you to act now without giving you time to research the offer.

Here are a few suggestions for spotting job ad scams:
1) Ads should clearly contain the name of the hiring company.
2) Ads should contain details about the position, including tasks and required education.
3) Be skeptical of wage claims significantly higher than the local labor market or what the required education level would indicate. You can review wages for New Mexico at laser.state.nm.us.
4) You can research extreme claims at www.snopes.com.
5) Be very skeptical of unsolicited e-mails. Keep track of companies you have contacted and check that the e-mail is truly from a company you have submitted an application or resume with.

Always research a potential employer:
1) Google the company’s name to research recent articles about its products and services. Not only will this bring to light any shady job announcements, but might give you insight into how to best apply for the job.
2) Check for any complaints filed against the company with the Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.com).

3) Check the New Mexico Attorney General’s website for current scams (www.nmag.gov).

Here are a few suggestions to protect you from identity theft during your job hunt:
1) Provide a resume with a post-office box address instead of your home address.
2) Use a disposable e-mail address to prevent spam from clogging up your normal e-mail in-box.
3) List just your initials in the document and not your full name.
4) Don’t enter your social security number if the website isn’t secure. The Internet Explorer browser shows a closed lock if the site is secure.

If you feel that you’ve been targeted by one of these scams please notify the New Mexico Attorney General’s Office http://www.nmag.gov/office/contact.aspx.