

Fides Insurance Group / Office of Risk Management
RISK ALERT
ACCOUNT HACK RISK
March 31, 2022, No. 2021-09

PLEASE READ!!!

Direct/automatic deposit and wire scams are becoming increasingly common, and ever more sophisticated. With Easter coming, organizations should be extra vigilant about unauthorized charges that may occur during holiday periods when bank accounts are less monitored. Grant Thornton estimates that Good Friday through Patriot's Day will be a period of increased risk for such attacks. Intelligent and capable seasoned professionals are falling victim. Please do not think you or anyone on your staff are immune – anyone can fall victim to these scams. Carefully review and verify every request regarding financial matters.

One of our institutions was recently hacked, which they discovered while reviewing their account. Charges came through as **“Pre-Authorized ACH Debits,”** but the parish never authorized these payments nor made aware of the transactions.

Luckily, the business manager discovered the charges, but not before thousands of dollars were stolen from the parish. In recent years, phishing emails resembling banks like Citizens Bank and Wells Fargo have been a popular method of scamming organizations, getting them to click on phony links or make false deposits.

Be on your guard for unauthorized charges and always take several steps before you respond to any request for payment or for a change in the method of payment. Scammers know that once lost, there is usually no way to get your money back.

To prevent these types of cyber scams from happening to your parish or institution, please take the following steps:

- **Frequently check your bank account for possible unauthorized payments.** Check over all charges at least once a week and flag any suspicious or unrecognized charges. Be on the alert for very small amounts that may “test” whether they can follow up with a larger amount, as this is a big red flag.
- **Check with your bank** about controls over unauthorized debits.
- **A transfer of funds should never be performed solely on the basis of an email exchange. Obtain verbal confirmation** by calling your known contact directly.
- **Do not call the number listed in the email or on the letter you received.** If it's a fraudulent email or letter, the number will be fraudulent as well. Always call the legitimate number of your known contact.
- **Do not share bank account numbers or other banking information over email.** Banks will never ask for your account number, social security number, name, address or password in an email or text message. They will only ask you to provide this information to verify your identity when you call them directly.

- **Watch for potentially misspelled Words.** It's less common these days to find typos in a fraudulent email or text, but you may still encounter it. If you find one in the message, it is most likely a scam.
- **If the tone of the email is urgent, this should be a signal for additional caution.** Never wire money to anyone who pressures you to pay immediately, or who says a wire transfer is the only way to pay.
- **Always look at the sender's email for clues of its legitimacy.** Examine the sender's email address closely, comparing it to previous emails or correspondence known to be legitimate. Scammers will use email addresses that look similar to a legitimate email, but you will usually find tell-tale signs that it's a fraud.
- **When in doubt, call the IT department or the Office of Risk Management.**

REMEMBER: STOP – CALL – CONFIRM

If you have any questions, please contact our office at jfm@rcab.org.