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FRAUD ALERT:

Verify Professional Engineer Credentials to Avoid Online Scams

Recently there has been a significant rise in online scams where individuals impersonate licensed Professional Engineers (PEs). These individuals employ sophisticated tactics, including the use of forged credentials and fake online profiles, to secure employment or obtain money for fraudulent services. Such activities can lead to significant financial losses.

Protect yourself and your projects by checking for these red flags and adhering to essential verification procedures:

Common Warning Signs of Fraudulent Practices

- **Lack of Verifiable Online Presence:** This is a primary indicator of potential fraud. Always verify an engineer's licensure information, physical address, and phone number directly on the Alabama Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors (BELS) website (www.bels.alabama.gov). Be suspicious if the only online presence is a vague social media page or if the provided contact details do not align with normal company contact information.
- **Inconsistencies in Credentials:** The individual's name, license number, and license expire date should precisely match their public professional profiles (e.g., LinkedIn) and official licensing board records.
- **Unsolicited or "Too Good to Be True" Offers:** Exercise caution if an "individual" initiates contact unexpectedly via text, messaging applications (such as WhatsApp or Telegram), or a generic email address (e.g., Gmail, Yahoo), promising high reward for minimal costs.
- **Urgency and Pressure Tactics:** Scammers frequently create a sense of urgency, demanding quick action (e.g., "respond within 24 hours") to prevent thorough research or due diligence.
- **Requests for Payment or Sensitive Information Early In the Process:** Legitimate companies and engineers will not request sensitive personal

details, such as a Social Security number or bank account information, until a formal offer has been accepted and a contract duly signed.

- **Suspicious Communication Channels:** Official communications normally originate from a verifiable company email domain (e.g., @companyname.com), not a free personal email account.

How to Verify a Professional Engineer's License

The most effective method for protection is to verify the engineer's license status through the applicable state board:

1. **Identify the State of Licensure:** Engineers are licensed by the specific state or jurisdiction where they practice; and can be licensed in multiple states. The location of the project will determine the appropriate state board to contact.
2. **Utilize the Official State Licensing Board Website:** Every state engineering board provides a public, online license lookup service to verify an engineer's credentials and to check for any disciplinary actions. In Alabama, for example, you can use the Alabama Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers License Search (www.bels.alabama.gov).
3. **Contact the Board Directly:** If any doubts persist, contact the state board's office directly using a phone number found on their official government website, not a number supplied by the potential scammer. For further inquiries, you may contact BELS investigative staff at 334-242-5568.

Reporting Fraud

If you suspect you have encountered an individual fraudulently using an engineer's credentials or a job scam:

- Immediately cease all communication; do not respond further or provide any information.
- Report the incident to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at ReportFraud.ftc.gov.
- If the fraud involves an engineer's credentials, report it to the relevant state licensing board's investigative staff; BELS can be reached at 334-242-5568.
- You can also report the incident to the Consumer Division of the Attorney General's office.
- Contact your local law enforcement agencies.