



ASCIP *RISK ALERT!*

Date: August 1, 2005

Attention: ASCIP Members

Subject: FRAUDULANT FIRE INSPECTIONS

ASCIP is fortunate to have access to certain Fire Service information which staff reviews for the benefit of its membership. We have noted several reports of possibly illegal or unethical activity related to persons representing themselves as acting on behalf of a local fire jurisdiction to gain access to businesses for the purpose of conducting 'fire safety inspections' for which they later attempt to invoice the business owner.

One recent report indicated that someone from XXXXXXXX Fire Protection (aka XXXX) is going into local businesses stating that they are contracted with the local Fire Department to conduct inspections and service fire extinguishers. They flash a badge and state that it was ordered by the Fire Marshal, continue to conduct "an inspection", then ask for a signature from whoever will give it to them on their "official inspection sheet". They then leave the location and a few weeks later the business gets several bills for the "inspection" and other questionable services although nothing was actually done but the initial inspection work.

In this account, the business owner complained and told the "service company" to prove that it was an authorized inspection and a legitimate invoice whereupon they produced forms that were forged with the signature of the person who signed the original inspection sheet. This incident has been referred to the fraud division and further research has indicated that a group of people have done this in surrounding cities as well. It appears however that only a few victims in each city have notified their local authorities of what may be a prolific scam.

Although we have not yet received reports of this type associated with schools or colleges, ASCIP recommends that its members be alert to such activity and, should anyone appear to be using a similar tactic to gain access to your facilities, it may be prudent to challenge their authority or quietly make a call to the local fire jurisdiction to verify if they are a legitimate contractor. If not, we surmise that the authorities would be pleased to have a word with them.

Los Angeles County has apprehended several individuals who have been charged with various crimes in these matters. Other fire service administrators statewide continue to report new instances of apparent fire equipment service fraud and misrepresentation.

Updated July, 2006