FTC Consumer Alert

Federal Trade Commission ■ Bureau of Consumer Protection ■ Division of Consumer & Business Education

FTC Warns of Oil Spill Job Scams

It's hard to believe someone would steal money from a person looking for a job, especially work involving helping to clean up the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. But scammers see opportunities to cash in on the situation.

Bogus ads for oil spill clean-up jobs in the Gulf are appearing in newspapers, online, and in email inboxes. Some promoters claim they can get you a job once you pay them for training or certifications. Others require you to pay a fee before they let you start. Some send bogus emails that may appear to be from BP, and ask for your personal information and fees as part of the application process. Still others may falsely claim they've been authorized by BP to hire clean-up crews.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the nation's consumer protection agency, says the tell-tale signs of oil spill job scams are similar to the tell-tale signs of every job scam – and that people who are looking for Gulf clean-up jobs have several sources of legitimate employment and volunteer opportunities.

Signs of a Scam

If you're looking for a job or want to volunteer your services in the Gulf clean-up, here are some red flags:

- **Guaranteed jobs or guaranteed placements.** Regardless of how severe the situation – and how much you want to believe the promises – no legitimate company makes guarantees about placing anyone in a job.
- **An employer or employment-service firm that wants you to pay** for training, certification, or its expenses placing you with a company. Legitimate employers and firms don't ask you to pay them for the promise of a job. In fact, it's against the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines for employers to charge employees for training.
- **Vague offers.** The more general the email "job" description, the less likely there is a valid job. If you see phrases like "We have thousands of jobs" or "We represent BP," consider it a problem. Report it to the FTC. Send a copy of unwanted or deceptive messages to **spam@uce.gov** and then delete it. The FTC uses the unsolicited emails stored in this database to pursue law enforcement actions against people who send deceptive spam email.
- **You're asked for your financial information.** No credible employer needs your bank account information or credit or debt account numbers to interview you or hire you. Scam artists can use this information to commit identity theft.
- **Companies that charge you for lists of available jobs.** Some listing services and "consultants" write ads that sound like they have jobs waiting for you. But they're selling information about how to find a job, and that's generally available for free.

For Legitimate Opportunities in the Gulf

If you're interested in getting involved with the clean-up, here are several sources for legitimate opportunities. Remember that some jobs do require special training, but stipends are available to cover those costs.

- **Deepwater Horizon Response** – www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com/go/site/2931/ 1-866-448-5816
- **BP** – www.bp.com/GulfofMexicoResponse
- **Alabama** – Environmental Cleanup – http://es.dir.alabama.gov/local/environment
- **Florida** – www.myfloridalegal.com, the site of the Florida Attorney General, or www.doacs.state.fl.us, the state Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- **Louisiana** – www.losco.state.la.us, the Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office, and www.laworks.net, the Louisiana Workforce Commission
- **Mississippi** – Mississippi Department of Employment Security – www.mdes.ms.gov or 1-800-224-1388

State Volunteer Opportunities

If you're interested in volunteering, call the Deepwater Horizon Response Volunteer Request Line at 1-866-448-5816 or visit these state websites.

- **Alabama** – www.servealabama.gov/2010/default.aspx
- **Florida** – www.volunteerfloridadisaster.org
- **Louisiana** – www.volunteerlouisiana.gov
- **Mississippi** – www.volunteermississippi.org/1800Vol/OpenIndexAction.do

Employer Responsibilities

OSHA Worker Safety Requirements are designed to ensure that oil spill response and clean-up operations are done safely, effectively and efficiently. For more information about common operations, hazards, training and worker protection, see www.osha.gov/oilspills/deepwater-oil-spill-factsheet-ppe.pdf

For More Information and to File a Complaint

Watch the FTC's video, "Don't Pay for a Promise" at ftc.gov/jobscams. It features details on how you can spot and report job scams to the FTC.

Check with your local consumer protection agency, state Attorney General's Office, and the Better Business Bureau to see if any complaints have been filed about a company with which you intend to do business.

The FTC works to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop and avoid them. To file a complaint or get free information on consumer issues, visit ftc.gov or call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261. Watch a new video, "How to File a Complaint," at ftc.gov/video to learn more. The FTC enters consumer complaints into the Consumer Sentinel Network, a secure online database and investigative tool used by hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

Federal Trade Commission	ftc.gov
1-877-FTC-HELP	For The Consumer