



LEGAL PRACTITIONERS FIDELITY FUND

SOUTH AFRICA

Watch out for this scam doing the rounds

The Legal Practitioners Fidelity Fund (LPFF) would like to warn legal practitioners of a scam targeting law firms in order to defraud them.

Legal practitioners must be wary when being contacted by a “representative” of the LPFF, claiming that overpayments or payments in error were made, and trying to induce them to repay these monies.

The modus operandi is when a practitioner/ Law firm receives a call, an email or letter informing them that a payment was made into the law firms’ trust/ business account. This is usually in the form of a cheque deposit, and under the pretence that it is a payment from the LPFF for Audit refunds.

A proof of payment is sent and the fraudsters contact the law firm as a “representative” of LPFF, informing them of the “overpayment” or payment “made in error” and requesting a repayment to rectify the situation.

If the law firm makes the repayment before the bank clears the cheque and it is uncovered that the cheque is fraudulent and as a result no funds are transferred to the law firms’ account, leaving the law firm defrauded and the scammers disappears with the money.

There are ways in which legal practitioners can ensure that they don’t fall victim to this scam including doing the following:

- Be suspicious of emails received from non-business accounts, such as Gmail
- Be suspicious of emails with spelling mistakes and poor grammar
- Be suspicious when receiving communication from someone alleging an overpayment or payment made in error, and made by cheque
- No ‘refund’ should be made without first verifying with the Bank that the deposit that has been made into your account is indeed valid

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- All staff, and especially those dealing with finance, should be informed and educated about such scams

Legal Practitioners can contact the LPFF directly at 012 622 3900 and ask for Ernest Tshidzumba to report any suspicious behaviour