

RHR Information Services, Inc.

SelectSmart News

Editor's Note



Summer has come to a close and fall is here. We hope you're enjoying great weather this season!

As our season slows (though only slightly) we look forward to continued growth by way of new accounts. If you know of anyone that may benefit from a background screening program, please contact your RHR Information Services, Inc. Representative with the referral information.

This month, we have stories regarding government screening errors, credit card fraud and tricks to cheat a drug test. Enjoy!

Elizabeth Army

Client Relations Coordinator

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Immigrant Screening Mistakes by Government?

A congressional panel is calling for an investigation and hearing into reports that applicants for green cards, work visas and other immigration documents were not properly screened against the U.S. terrorist watch list.

Rep. Ed Royce, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Terrorism

and Nonproliferation, called for the hearing Tuesday. Royce, R-Fullerton, has held several hearings on problems within the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service and said the recent report is evidence of a threat to national security.

"These shortcomings at USCIS

are very problematic as we confront resourceful terrorists who will do whatever they can to harm this nation," Royce said. Jose Montero, acting director for communications for the Citizenship and Immigration Service, said that a national security background

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Mistakes, continued



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check is completed for every application that USCIS receives for an immigration benefit.

"Last year, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services conducted more than 35 million national security background checks," Montero said.

Roughly 75 percent of applications at the center that resulted in a "hit" during background checks were not properly vetted or checked during the past four years, according to interviews with National Benefits Center employees. Those hits came from criminal and terrorist databases compiled by various U.S. government agencies. Adjudicators, the Citizenship and Immigration Service employees who evaluate and decide which applications to approve, said they were not properly trained on what to do if an application triggered a hit.

Montero said, however, that all hits regarding national security threats get passed on to a specialized unit in Washington, D.C.

"At the National Benefits Center, as at every other U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service office, once a background check identifies a national security hit, the adjudica-

tion of that case is immediately stopped and the case is sent directly to the Office of Fraud Detection and National Security where a team of specially trained USCIS employees investigate and resolve that hit," Montero said.

But those working at the center said they didn't usually know when they had a database hit. According to official e-mails obtained by the Daily Bulletin, supervisors at the center were first notified May 8 of their failure to have the adjudicators appropriately screen the applications.

On Aug. 7, the adjudicators were finally notified that they were not properly screening for terrorist ties and criminals. They were reminded of the failure Aug. 11. At that time, the employees were told they were not accessing the requisite information "at all."

Other documents obtained by the paper recommended granting benefits to applicants on the terrorist watch list. One document, dated July 27, recommends granting an immigration benefit to an applicant whose name was confirmed as being on the terrorist watch list. The documents were provided to at least one senator last week.

In 2002, President Bush announced a five-year, \$500 million initiative to achieve and maintain a six-month processing time for most immigration benefit applications, thereby eliminating the millions of backlogged applications by October. Critics contend the Citizenship and Immigration Service is cutting corners to achieve the president's goal, and adjudicators interviewed by the Daily Bulletin said they are forced to process applications quickly or lose promotions - perhaps their jobs.

"The system is rigged to approve applications and short-change security," Royce said. "There are too many uninvestigated complaints against USCIS employees who issue green cards, work visas and other immigration benefits."

Robert Cowan, director of the National Benefits Center, told the Daily Bulletin this past week that "USCIS opted at the national level to not always require the F14 or F15 keys," which trigger the database searches. Cowan said employees were misinformed by supervisors in the Aug. 11 e-mail that said the failure to check the F14 or F15 keys was the reason the center noted a 75 percent failure rate in

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Credit Card Fraud - A Crisis



Identity theft has been all over the news in the recent years. But consider the following scenarios, new ways in which criminals obtain your credit card information.

You are at the local gym where you locked your belongings in a

locker. You return to your workout to find the locker open. Searching your wallet you see all your credit cards in place. Later, a bill arrives for \$14,000 in credit card charges. Looking in your wallet, you realize the thieves replaced your credit card

with a similar one that was expired. Always check your cards closely any time someone has had access to them.

You pay for your meal at a restaurant on a credit card. The

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Crisis, continued

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waitress returns your card and you notice that it is a different card. The waitress goes to the back and corrects the "mistake." You just saved yourself from the latest scam, always check that the card you are returned is

yours!!

With the latest, greatest and tiniest cell phones these days be aware of what cashiers are doing. People are reporting credit card theft when their credit card isn't even stolen. How is this possible? People use their cam-

era phones to take a quick picture of your card and then they have your information.

Be aware of your surroundings and check your credit card statements closely. The quicker you identify a potential problem the better set you are to handle it!

Mistakes, continued

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resolving hits on background checks. Cowan said the 75 percent figure was attributable to employees not properly marking enforcement documents, misspelling names or leaving out names altogether.

Cowan further stated that any allegations of security being compromised to reduce the backlog are unfounded.

While statements by staff members refute Cowan's explanation of the error rate, both current and former USCIS employees, speaking on condition of anonymity, stated that a 75 percent error rate in misspelling or missing names would lead to even larger numbers of applications being improperly screened. They said it also would lead to benefits being granted to an untold number of individuals with terrorist ties and others who would be major threats to public safety.

"In light of the reported government documentation provided to Congress, it would appear only today's announcement of congressional hearings, accompanied by subpoenas, and an independent investigation will shed light on the truth, one way or another," said Michael Maxwell, former director of internal affairs at USCIS, who has testi-

fied numerous times before Congress.

Adjudicators from the National Benefits Center and several from offices in the central region of the country contacted the Daily Bulletin this past week, saying that similar failures to screen applicants are happening nationwide.

"I didn't know about the F14 or F15 key until I read the story - I don't even have one on my keyboard," said a Citizenship and Immigration Service manager from the central region who asked to remain anonymous for fear of reprisal. "But the real problem is the push to get the backlog completed by October, and adjudicators are processing applications so fast that there is no time for thorough background checks," he added.

A current USCIS adjudicator, also from the central region, completely unaware of the F14 and F15 search functions, stated customer service has taken priority over national security. "The American public has no idea just how bad the system really is," he said.

Further information provided this week to Congress and the Daily Bulletin shows that the Citizenship and Immigration Service changed standard operating procedures in February and

March for the computer background-check system. The National Benefits Center issued their own set of new instruction in May.

The procedures effective in February and March did not contain any directions for adjudicators to hit the F14 or F15 keys to check against watch lists. In a May 25 e-mail, however, National Benefits Center supervisor Norma Limon sent revised instructions for doing checks at the center - making it mandatory for adjudicators to hit the F14 and F15 keys.

An employee's failure to hit the function key would render the background check "incomplete," according to later e-mails.

Numerous staff at the National Benefits Center said Tuesday that USCIS is requiring mandatory retraining for all adjudicators. If adjudicators opt out of the training, they will be held responsible for any mistakes made on the applications, one adjudicator said.

Center employees estimate more than 2.8 million applications would need to be rechecked in order to ensure proper background checks were carried out on applications dating to 2002.

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The Right Path to the Right People



Disclaimer: This newsletter has been developed for informational purposes only for use by the customers of RHR Information Services, Inc., and should not be relied upon as definitively accurate. Due to the complex nature of employment law, we strongly suggest that you work closely with legal council when making employment related decisions.

Top 5 Tricks Used to Cheat Drug Tests

According to some research, nearly 19 percent of on-the-job fatalities show that the person died with alcohol, drugs or both in their system. The Federal Government estimates that 71 percent of illegal drug users are employed.

Every day an applicant tries to get out of a drug test or tries to cheat drug tests. Below are some of the more common methods used to try and cheat drug tests.

Detoxification: Many drug users will try anything to “flush” the drugs out of their system. They’ll use home remedies, drink gallons of water or buy the over the counter purifiers. Most drug testing methods will still catch the drug use or they will note the signs of detoxification.

Inability to Produce: Some testers will claim they cannot produce enough urine

to get a sample. Most labs will ask them to wait until they can. A newer option is saliva based drug testing which requires no urine.

The Switch: A common way to cheat a drug test is to bring a clean sample to the test and present that as theirs. Most tests today will look for temperature and other signs that the urine does not belong to the applicant.

Invasion of Privacy: Applicants that do not want to submit to a test for drugs will often claim it is an invasion of privacy. A hiring and employment policy that has been reviewed by HR and a legal expert should allow you to fire or not hire, an employee/applicant that refuses to submit to a drug test.

Stall, Stall, Stall: Many applicants will

stall for time, claiming various excuses for not being able to take the test at the scheduled time. They hope that they can stall long enough for the drugs to leave their system or even that the need for a test will be forgotten by the employer.

A comprehensive pre-employment background check should include a drug test. Contact your RHR Information Services, Inc Representative for more information on the drug testing options we can offer.