



FORT LAUDERDALE POLICE DEPARTMENT NEWS RELEASE

Casey Liening | Office of the Chief | 954-828-5593 | cliening@fortlauderdale.gov

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FLPD RECOVERS APPROXIMATELY \$1.2M TAKEN IN A CONSTRUCTION FRAUD SCHEME

The Fort Lauderdale Police Department (FLPD) is announcing the recovery of nearly \$1.2 million after a thorough and complicated investigation into a nationwide construction fraud scheme. The City of Fort Lauderdale was targeted in this incident due to the ongoing construction of the new police headquarters. The incident occurred on Thursday, September 14, 2023.

FLPD was notified by the City of Fort Lauderdale's Finance Department after one of their employees received an email that appeared to be from Moss Construction, the contractor on the police department headquarters project. The employee paid the invoice for approximately \$1.2 million. A short time later, FLPD's Economic Crimes detectives were made aware, and they immediately began attempting to trace the money.

Although the investigation is still ongoing, FLPD's detectives were able to successfully recover all of the lost funds. Additionally, detectives are still attempting to identify the suspect(s) responsible for this incident. Schemes, such as the one involved in this case, can be intricate and complex and it can be very difficult to gather enough evidence to identify and charge those responsible.

The City of Fort Lauderdale was not the only victim in this nationwide construction fraud scheme. As such, there are many lessons to be learned following this incident. Some of the different facets of this particular scheme included sending fraudulent emails or invoices, victimizing vulnerable individuals in false online romantic relationships, and money laundering.

FLPD conducted this investigation with the assistance of the following agencies: The U.S. Secret Service, the FBI, the Mariposa County Sheriff's Office and the Mariposa County District Attorney's Office in California, the Avondale Police Department in Arizona, and the Lee's Summit Police Department in Missouri.

Below are some safety tips to raise awareness of the different types of scams:

Business Email Compromise (BEC):

- Common Targets: Real Estate/Title Companies, Attorneys, Insurance Providers, Yacht Brokers, any other businesses that make large lump sum payments.
- How to avoid becoming a victim:
 - Never change banking info via email. Instead, call a known point of contact.
 - Email directly to the known email address rather than reply to the thread.
 - Review the email domain name (john@abc123.com).

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Romance Scams:

- Many times, the criminal targets older people and those who may be struggling in a relationship and/or are emotionally vulnerable. Though most criminals aim for vulnerable targets, anyone can become a victim of this type of scam.
- Common Ways to Target Individuals:
 - Work From Home Job Listings
 - Dating Sites or Social Media
 - Individuals seeking companionship or assistance financially
- Helpful info from the U.S. Secret Service: [Stay Safe Online: Avoid Romance Scams.](#)
- If you are impacted by Business Email Compromises or Romance Scams, you should report it to local police first and followed by the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at [Internet Crime Complaint Center\(IC3\) | File a Complaint](#)

FLPD encourages everyone to remain vigilant and aware of the potential for scams. Criminals often use internet and phone tactics to deceive and exploit unsuspecting individuals. Use extreme caution when you are asked to make a payment over the phone in any form, instructed to put money into a cryptocurrency ATM, or create an online crypto account. If you suspect you are the victim of a phone scam or fraud in the City of Fort Lauderdale, contact FLPD at our non-emergency number, 954-764-HELP (4357).

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