

Job seekers warned to be careful with their ID numbers

The Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) has warned job seekers to be careful with their identity numbers following a surge in public complaints regarding bogus employers.



Image source: Sebastiaan Stam from [Pexels](#)

The UIF said the bogus employers have reportedly used job seekers' identity numbers to register them with the fund and claim for the Covid-19 Ters benefit, and in some cases, unemployment benefits.

In a statement on Tuesday, the Department of Employment and Labour said most of the complaints emerged when several people applied for the Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRD) R350 grant from the South African Social Security Agency (Sassa). However, their claims were declined since they were registered with the UIF.

“These are mainly learners/students, who are recruited for 'learnerships' and their studies are allegedly sponsored for R3,500, which was never paid to the learners but ended up being labelled as their monthly salary when claiming UIF,” the department said.

In terms of the UIF's normal training programmes, the department said learners are recruited through the Department of Employment and Labour's Employment Services of South Africa (Essa) work seekers' online portal. Essa links unemployed people with employment and training opportunities.

UIF Commissioner, Teboho Maruping, said as part of the fund's efforts to create employment opportunities and upskill young people, the UIF has several training programmes under the Labour Activation Programmes (LAP).

Through LAP, the UIF partners with training institutions, who upskill the trainees in various fields such as hospitality, aviation, administration, agriculture, and security amongst others, leading to job opportunities.

"To support the trainees participating in the programme, the UIF provides a monthly stipend, which is not a salary and should have no UIF deductions attached to it," Maruping said.

Maruping said subsequent to receiving these complaints, the Department of Employment and Labour's provincial Risk Management Units, launched multiple investigations and has already identified some of the bogus employers.

"However, the fund is not at this stage able to mention them, as investigations are still underway. However, we can mention that some of these companies are in Kwazulu-Natal and others around the country.

"Furthermore, the fund has introduced the payment verification process to check the validity and existence of employees, which will assist us in tracking down all the bogus employers," said Maruping.

Phase 2 of Covid-19 Ters "follow the money project" will commence this month and all employers that have declared false employees will be prioritised as part of the project.

Maruping said the appointed audit firms will be conducting an end-to-end audit process for all the employees on the payroll of the company against all UIF claims made by the company.

Any company found to be defrauding the UIF will be reported to law enforcement agencies and criminal cases will be opened with the South African Police Service.

Members of the public are advised to report these fraudulent activities at the nearest labour centre, or Fraud@labour.gov.za, or call the National Anti-Corruption Hotline on 0800 701 701.

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