

June 17, 2010

Dear Food Facility Operator:

The San Francisco Department of Public Health, Environmental Health (DPH) has become aware of a fraud scheme targeting food facilities and other small businesses in the City and County of San Francisco and across the state of California. This letter provides you information regarding this fraud scheme and the means to protect your business.

A number of restaurants in California have recently received telephone calls from a person claiming to be a “health inspector” introducing a new procedure for arranging a health inspection. The phony “health inspector” asks the business owner to follow a procedure to get a special “code” to confirm the upcoming inspection. Later the business owner receives a second call asking for the “confirmation code.” Of course, a “confirmed” inspection is not made and a real inspector does not arrive.

This phony inspector scheme is part of a larger fraud involving setting up “verified” accounts with a national on-line auction service. The purpose of the “code” request is to get the small business owner to provide false verification to the online auction service. The fraud artist does this to establish a bogus on-line account to be used in other fraud schemes.

To protect yourself from this fraudulent practice, remember:

- The San Francisco Environmental Health only conducts **unannounced** routine inspections. Environmental Health never calls in advance to schedule this kind of inspection.
- No new DPH inspection procedure has been developed. Any caller identifying him/herself as a “health inspector” asking you to participate in a “code” process is part of a fraud scheme.
- Staff of DPH, and any legitimate governmental agency, will always have proper photo identification. Ask to see proper identification if you have any doubts about the authenticity of an inspector visiting your business.
- Never give out personal or business identification information over the phone unless you are certain of the identity of the person you are speaking with.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Environmental Health at (415) 252-3800.