

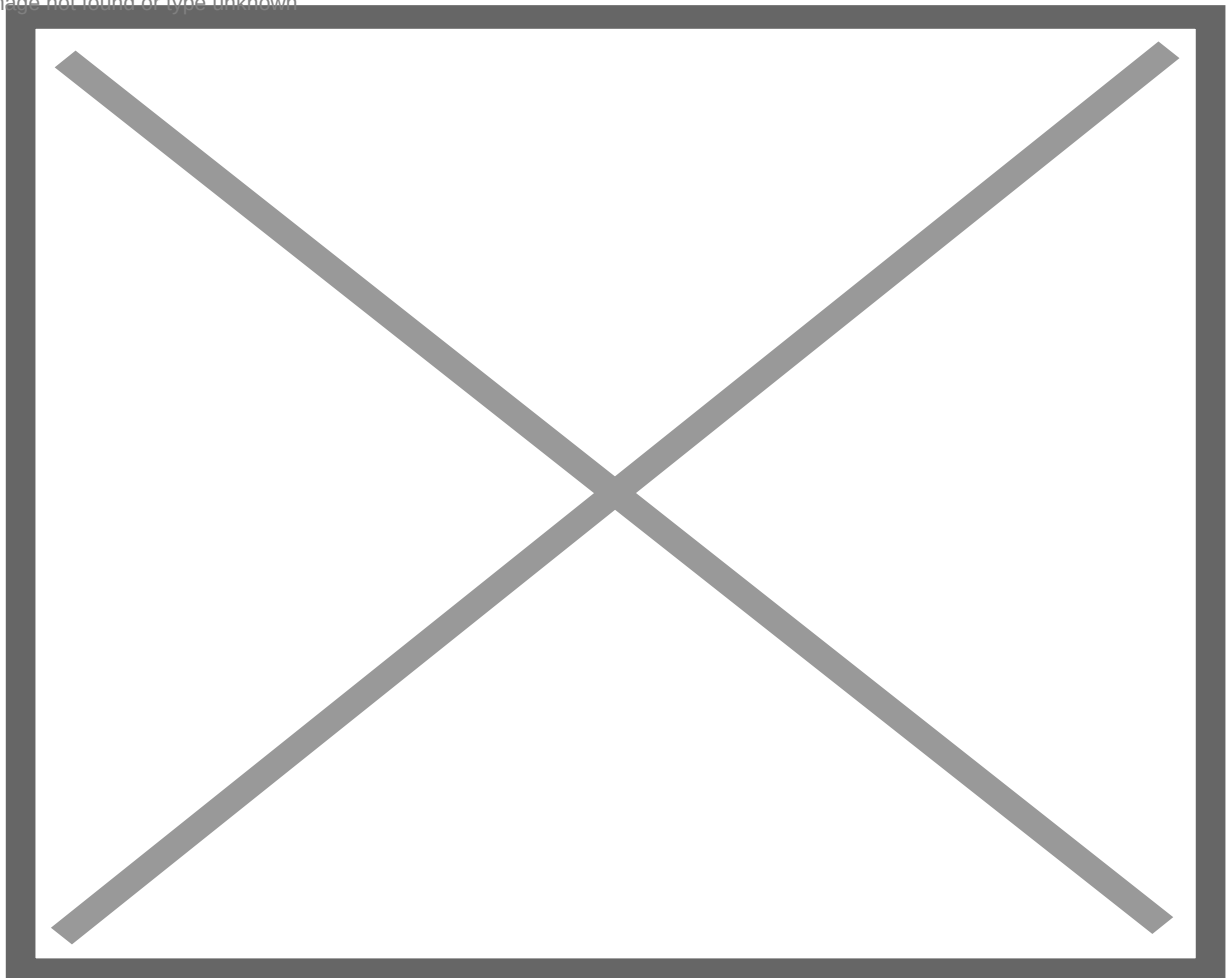
DLCA Warns Businesses of Fraudulent Fee Collection Scheme, Says Employees Never Collect Payments in the Field

DLCA is warning Virgin Islands businesses about individuals falsely claiming to collect licensing fees and other payments on the department's behalf. Officials say no DLCA employee is ever authorized to collect money during field visits or inspections.

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The V.I. Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs is warning Virgin Islands businesses and the public about individuals allegedly posing as DLCA representatives and attempting to collect licensing fees or other payments directly from businesses.

DLCA Commissioner H. Nathalie Hodge said department employees, representatives and agents do not visit businesses to collect licensing fees, penalties or other payments.

“We want every business owner in the Virgin Islands to be aware that DLCA personnel do not collect payments in the field,” Commissioner Hodge said. “Anyone claiming to represent the Department and requesting payment at your place of business should be treated with caution and reported immediately. Protect your financial information and do not hand over money to anyone outside of DLCA’s authorized payment channels.”

All legitimate payments to DLCA must be made through the department’s established procedures at an official DLCA office or through another payment method authorized by the agency.

DLCA employees conducting field visits or inspections are not authorized to solicit or accept payments. Businesses are being advised not to provide cash, checks, credit card information or any other form of payment to someone claiming to collect money for the agency outside its official channels.

If approached by someone seeking payment on DLCA’s behalf, businesses should not pay and should request identification without engaging further. When it can be done safely, DLCA recommends recording the person’s name, physical description, vehicle information or other identifying details and immediately reporting the incident to the department.

Anyone who believes criminal activity is underway or who feels threatened should immediately contact the V.I. Police Department.

DLCA said it is working with appropriate law-enforcement authorities to investigate the reports and urged businesses to remain vigilant. Prompt reporting, the agency said, can help authorities identify those responsible and prevent additional businesses from becoming victims.

Suspicious activity may be reported to the nearest DLCA office. On St. Croix, the department is located at the Golden Rock Shopping Center and can be reached at 340-713-3522. The St. John office at the Administrative Complex, “The Battery,” can be reached at 340-727-3303, while the St. Thomas office at the Property & Procurement Building in Subbase can be reached at 340-714-3522.