



From the desk of:

“Dugas Legal Investigations”

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BE AWARE: Unlicensed Private Investigators/Agencies

With the down economy and lack of financial resources, many private investigators and agencies are working without a license issued by the Louisiana State Board of Private Investigators Examiners (LSBPIE). This is against Louisiana law and these individuals may be imprisoned or incur serious fines.



One red flag for identifying unlicensed private investigators is an individual looking to cut you a “great deal.” For example, you are quoted a retainer fee which is more

than you can afford, then the investigator drastically cuts the rate. If the deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is not true.

Many individuals hire investigators, ask no questions, hand over a large cash retainer fee and never hear from them again. When you try to reach them by phone, you get answering machines and your calls are never returned. Before hiring a private investigator, please visit the LSBPIE website at www.LSBPIE.com to verify the license of the investigator.

Anyone may fall victim to unlicensed investigators, even a city government. As reported in a Times Picayune article by reporter David Hammer, the City of New Orleans paid its third party claims administrator in excess of \$522,000 over a two year period to retain the services of an unlicensed private investigator with a history of 19 felony convictions (17 were expunged) involving fraud and witness tampering. Dwayne Alexander, owner of World Wide Detective Agency from 2000 to 2009, was retained by the claims administrator to conduct surveillance on city workers with liability claims. In

2007, Alexander pleaded guilty to two felony charges of tax fraud and obstruction of justice related to his involvement with the “Canal Street Cartel” which was exposed by federal investigators. An exercise in due diligence before hiring a private investigator would have saved the city of New Orleans thousands of dollars.

Recently, the 2010 Louisiana Regular Legislative session passed HB 57 to become Act 909 which increased the fines for operating as an unlicensed private investigator. Today, an unlicensed private investigator may be fined a maximum of \$10,000 or imprisoned for three months to one year. This legislation was spawned by the LSBPIE’s efforts to detour unlicensed activity.

All private investigators in Louisiana must meet the requirements of law, take a 40 hour course, pass the state exam and be issued a license by the LSBPIE. In Louisiana, there are four types of licenses: agency, individual, apprentice and journeyman license. Only a licensed investigative agency can work for the general public, law firms, insurance companies and claims administrators. Individual, apprentice and journeyman must work for licensed agencies and cannot directly solicit or conduct business with clients.

Maria E. Dugas, co-owner of Dugas Legal Investigations, currently serves on the LSBPIE and is available to speak to your firm, company or organization about the licensing of Louisiana private investigators and new implementation of the journeyman license in June of 2010.

Any unlicensed private investigator activity should be reported to the LSBPIE at 2051 Silverside Drive, #190, Baton Rouge, LA 70808 or (800) 299-9696. ■



Dugas Legal Investigations

1411 West Tunnel Blvd., Houma, LA 70360
(985) 262-1299

www.LaSpy.com