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### State Warns Salon Owners about Inspector Imposter

**Albuquerque, NM** – The Regulation and Licensing Department is warning New Mexico salon owners to be on the lookout for imposters posing as state inspectors and asking for payment of hundreds of dollars to supposedly avoid closure.

Scam artists are calling local nail salons and demanding payment of as much as \$1,200 while threatening the owners with court action and closure of their shop. The scam often includes fraudulent documents, including letters and settlement agreements that look real, and are copied from genuine state documents.

“These are small business owners working hard to make a living and contribute to New Mexico’s economy,” says Superintendent of Regulation and Licensing, Mike Unthank. “It’s repugnant that a common criminal would prey on small business owners, much less to do so by impersonating one of our state inspectors.”

Scam Artists are instructing owners to secure a money order or a prepaid cash card, and to mail the payment to a P.O. Box.

#### To prevent being victimized by this scam, nail salon owners should note:

- State inspectors will **never** ask for a cash payment, a money order, or a money card.
- State inspectors will **never** demand immediate payment.
- State Inspectors will **always** have official identification.
- If you are contacted by anyone claiming to work for the Regulation and Licensing Department, and you’re not absolutely certain who the individual is, please call the Board of Barbers and Cosmetologists office immediately at (505) 476-4622, option 4.

“Small businesses are the backbone of our New Mexico economy,” says Unthank. “A few hundred dollars is a lot of money to a small business. We’re doing everything we can to protect our licensees from falling victim to crooked con artists.”

The Regulation and Licensing Department has spoken to about 10 different nail salon owners who have been contacted by an individual claiming to work for the Regulation and Licensing Department or the New Mexico Board of Barbers and Cosmetologists. None of these small business owners have fallen victim to this scam. If others have been contacted, they can aid in the investigation by calling 505-476-4622, option 4. The current scam has focused on Vietnamese-owned shops that provide nail services like manicures and pedicures. However, it’s

possible the scam artist could target other communities, or even other businesses that undergo inspections, like restaurants.

The Regulation and Licensing Department, Board of Barbers and Cosmetologists license about 18,000 individual cosmetologists, barbers, and facilities throughout New Mexico.

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