

SOUTH CAROLINA LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

MARK SANFORD
Governor



REGINALD I. LLOYD
Director

FACT SHEET – JULY 9, 2009 CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECKS FOR FIREFIGHTERS

During 2008, SLED's Chief Information Officer and Criminal Justice Information Systems (CJIS) Officer conducted an extensive analysis on SLED's Data Center's business practices. In January 2009, there were a number of inefficiencies identified that could be improved or eliminated commensurate to the SLED's budget resources.

To date, staffing in the SLED Data Center has been reduced by 40% due to budget reductions; however SLED continues to provide CJIS services mandated by statute. These services include concealed weapons permits (105% increase since 2008), security officer registrations (5% increase since 2008), private investigator licensing (10% increase since 2008), and criminal background checks (10% decrease since 2008).

Subsequently, we focused on manpower intensive programs - one of which was billing accounts for name based criminal background checks. Over a period of several years, criminal background check billing accounts grew to over 3,200 accounts and 4,000 users.

A business decision was made to discontinue all 3,200+ billing accounts since SLED does not receive reimbursement for billing costs and is not mandated by statute or regulation to maintain billing accounts. SLED is statutorily prohibited from assessing fees for the billing costs which include labor, postage, handling, and consumables. SLED has lost more than \$250,000 annually to unpaid bills and bad checks. The work in the billing and collection process far outweighs the worth of the current manual billing system. Lost revenue and delayed cash flow (30 - 120 days) are results of past business processes.

Since online South Carolina background checks have been established at SLED for ten years, citizens, businesses, organizations, and agencies have been able to conduct name based background checks instantaneously using the internet and a credit card (Visa/MasterCard). Therefore, billing accounts will be replaced with existing "pay-as-you-go" services. Since May 2009, letters, emails, telephone calls, and meetings were used to publicize discontinuance of the background check billing accounts.

SLED has been able to sustain many criminal justice services through the use of technology and eliminating excessive manpower requirements. The most efficient means of performing criminal records checks is to use SLED's web site with a credit card. Standard credit cards, pre-paid cards, and state procurement cards can also be used on the SLED web site.



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The South Carolina Firefighters Association (SCFA) was incorrectly informed how prospective firefighter background checks will be processed. Let me dispel the "Firefighter Hourly" myth:

"SLED Director Reggie Lloyd no longer wants to bill LLR/State Fire Marshals' Office for the cost of performing background checks on perspective firefighters. Lloyd reportedly wants to bill departments directly."

Since May 2009, SLED's CJIS Officer, CAPT Andrew Jordan has been working with State Fire Marshal John Reich to explain SLED's budgetary situation and plan to reduce costs. The State Fire Marshal's Office wanted to continue to have a billing account in order to divest total accountability and responsibility of the criminal background check process entirely to SLED.

Several plausible options in lieu of a billing account were provided to Mr. Reich that apparently were not disclosed to the SCFA:

- (1) Fire departments could mail background check applications to SLED with accompanying \$8 payment - reimbursement would be made to each fire department by LLR/Fire Marshal's Office;
- (2) LLR/Fire Marshal's Office could provide and authorize a credit card number for the use of fire departments so they may go online and conduct instantaneous background checks;
- (3) Fire departments could mail background check applications to LLR/Fire Marshal's Office for centralized online criminal background check processing. LLR/Fire Marshal's Office would pay for background checks online with their state procurement card and mail the results to the fire departments.

Any business process other than a billing account would streamline and improve accountability for the LLR/Fire Marshal's Office. About 300 - 400 background checks per month are completed for the LLR/Fire Marshal's Office. This task equates to approximately 5 hours per week by LLR/Fire Marshal's Office staff if they perform the work.

There will be no increase in the price of firefighters' background checks because \$8 is mandated by statute (Section 40-80-20, SC Code of Laws); this fee is not a "discounted rate".

Director Lloyd continues to ask SLED units to combat the inefficiencies and archaic business processes of the past to make this Agency an effective steward of the taxpayers' dollars. Questions or comments regarding this business improvement may be made to Paul Flondarina, SLED Chief Information Officer/IT Director at 803-896-7051.