

Advisory

Scams Using Fraudulent or Manipulated NFA Registration Documents

June 5, 2015

TO ALL FEDERAL FIREARMS LICENSEES (FFLs) AND FIREARM PURCHASERS

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) is advising the public to be aware of fraudulent National Firearms Act (NFA) tax registration forms being used to sell NFA firearms. Some individuals are presenting altered NFA Form 4's to prospective buyers in order to obtain a deposit, but never deliver the firearms.

A typical scam starts with a perpetrator (seller) claiming ownership of an NFA firearm through an altered Form 4, and then contacting an FFL to see if that FFL is interested in purchasing the NFA firearm. If the FFL expresses interest, the seller then requests that the FFL pay a percentage of the money upfront via cashier's check and the remainder of the money after the ATF Form 4 paperwork is finalized. All communication is done via email. If the fraudulent documents are printed, they appear to be rough scans of an original approved ATF Form 4. However, if the documents are viewed on a computer screen and are magnified, it often becomes evident that various sections have been altered.

To avoid this scam, FFL's and individuals should be aware of the following:

- The seller usually communicates via email.
- In box 1 (Type of Transfer), the tax stamp should be legible with a precise area for the serial number of the weapon to be hand written. The tax stamp has proven to be the most effective way to detect a fraudulent form. The perpetrators often paste a serial number over the serial number on the stamp. Upon closer inspection, it is often possible to detect the outline of the fraudulent serial number.
- In box 3a (Transferor), if the firearm was previously transferred from an FFL, the name of the FFL is often misspelled. A simple internet query for that FFL may assist those who suspect a scam.
- If applicable, box 7 (Transferor's FFL) will contain the Federal Firearms Licensee number which should be verified through the FFL eZ Check system. FFL eZ Check is a free service, available on the ATF website at www.atf.gov/content/firearms/firearms-industry/applications-FFL-eZ-check. If you have general questions regarding the FFL eZ Check system, you may contact the Federal Firearms Licensing Center at 1-866-662-2750.

If you believe you have been contacted by an individual utilizing fraudulent NFA forms, or have otherwise come in contact with a fraudulent or manipulated form, please contact your local ATF field office as soon as possible for assistance. A list of local field offices can be found at <http://www.atf.gov/content/contact-us/local-atf-office>.