

January 13, 2025

To: All HCPSS Suppliers

Re: Notice to All Suppliers-Fraudulent Quote Requests/Purchase Order Email Scam

Dear Suppliers,

The Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) Procurement Office would like to alert the community to a nationwide fraud scam that is targeting supplies for public school systems across the country. Please take precautions so that you are not a victim of this scam.

The email scam involves purchase orders and requests for product quotations that purport to originate from the Howard County Public School System but are in fact fraudulent.

According to multiple schools, the emailer requests quotes for specific merchandise. This activity includes the impersonation of HCPSS employees that hold purchasing authority. Later, a purchase order is emailed to the business that bears resemblance to an official HCPSS purchase order. The Purchase order instructs delivery to an address not affiliated with the school system.

After shipping the merchandise, the business never receives payment and is unable to retrieve the shipped products.

While HCPSS cannot prevent this illegal activity, we want to promote awareness and communicate the necessity of verifying requests. If an order is received by email, please alert your staff to check the email address to ensure it has the valid extension of “@hcpss.org”. Current purchasing staff can be verified by checking the HCPSS purchasing website at <https://purchasing.hcpss.org/about> .

Please also confirm the address for any suspicious or large dollar orders, with the procurement office. Additionally, all HCPSS orders will be shipped within the State of Maryland and mostly to the zip codes of 21042, 21046.

If you would like the procurement office to verify an email’s legitimacy before fulfilling the order or you receive what appears to be a suspicious order, please forward it to purchasing@hcpss.org for verification.

Sincerely,

Robert Bruce

Robert Bruce, NIGP-CPP, CPPO, CPPB
Director of Procurement and Materials Management

cc: File