



## MEMORANDUM

To: APA California Board of Directors  
From: Hing Wong, AICP, Past President  
Re: Email Scam  
Date: January 28, 2017

APA California and many of our Sections were hit by an email scam at the end of December. The person(s) behind the scam pretended to be the highest leader of the organization -- in one case, me as the President, and in the other cases, as one of the Section Directors. The person(s) customized each email and made it look like it came from the President or Section Director by using our email addresses (i.e., hingw@abag.ca.gov) and sending it to the financial person (treasurer or administrator who has access to the funds). Changing an email header is fairly easy to do.

The person(s) first asked for financial statements. If the unsuspecting treasurer felt it was a legitimate email, the treasurer would then send the financial statements to the con artist(s). Only one Section fell into the trap and sent their financial statements. That Section has since closed those accounts and reopened with new account numbers. If the treasurer wasn't aware that this was a scam and continued the conversation, the person(s) would then request a transfer of funds (thousands of dollars) to a designated account using a line item from the Chapter or Section budget.

Each email sent was personalized and very specific. The person(s) added our work info (i.e., ABAG and my work address) at the bottom (footer) of the emails to make it like it really came from the actual sender. All of the info obtained and used in this scam are available publicly online through our websites, such as our titles, positions, email addresses, work address, phone numbers, etc. What made this harder to catch was that it's not one of those easy-to-spot email scams that one might get saying that I'm stuck in a foreign country and lost all my cash, so please wire money.

As far as we know, other Chapters were not hit with this scam. APA National just sent over the *APA Chapter Financial Management Guide*. I would like to form a subcommittee to go over our financial procedures and to see if we can take any precautionary measures.