

Protect Yourself: Report Stolen Notary Seals!

Have you recently left a job and had your seal or journal held back by your employer? Have you noticed that one or more of your seals are missing? If so, take immediate action to protect yourself.

This year's news stories have told us that stolen and missing notary seals are frequently the basis of fraudulent transactions. In those stories, notaries are accused of being complicit in illegal land transactions or other types of fraud. If the notaries claim their notary seals are lost or missing, but have not reported the fact to their notary public administrators' offices or law enforcement, the involved notaries have big problems. It is hard to tell if those notaries are guilty or themselves victims of crimes.

In many states, when notaries do not report the theft of notary stamps, journals, or commission certificates, they have broken the law. The same may be true when notary seals and journals are illegally retained by employers. Whether or not your state penalizes notaries with fines or criminal charges for not making these types of reports, report these events to protect yourself.

The uniqueness of your official notary signature can't always defend you. Your notarial signature may be on displayed in the public records of your county or state if you have notarized documents involved in real estate transactions. If so, it's not hard for a savvy criminal to find your signature and learn to duplicate it sufficiently to fool many law enforcement and court officials. In these types of cases, you have no defense against fraudulent use of your stolen notary seal. If you have not reported your seal as lost or stolen, how can you prove you did not help a criminal steal property or other assets by using your notarial seal and signature?

The Delaware Notary Association recommends keeping your seal and journal under locking key when not in use. Always be aware of where they are when not locked up. If your employment has changed and your previous employer had paid for your commission, seal and journal, they ARE YOURS to take with you. Your former employer CANNOT and does NOT have the right to require you to surrender these items. The Delaware Notary Association recommends you to contact the State of Delaware Notary Public Administrator if you need any help in this matter if you have been a victim of notary seal theft and you are unsure of what to do.

Protect yourself! Please report theft of your notary seals and journals to your state's notary public administrator and law enforcement. Make sure that your local police or sheriff's department has a record of the theft and that you retain a copy for your own files. When you file a notice of theft with your notary public administrator, do so via

certified mail return receipt requested or in another manner that gives you proof that you delivered that complaint to your state notary offices.

NOTE: This article serves as information purposes to broaden the knowledge of the notary public. The Delaware Notary Association is dedicated in keeping the Delaware Notary with working information in performing their duties to the best they can and to the fullest.