



FIRST AMERICAN TITLE INSURANCE COMPANY

5775 Glenridge Drive, Suite A-200, Atlanta, GA 30328

404-250-1604 Fax: 404-250-1609

Date: July 26, 2002 **Underwriting Bulletin GA-85**

To: All Agents of First American Title Insurance Company and Attorney's Title Guaranty Fund

Subject: **Fraudulent Bonus Checks for Non-Existent Jobs**

FDIC memo # "FIL-30-2002, March 28, 2002" – Fraudulent Bonus Checks for Non-Existent Jobs.

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) has learned that some individuals and banks are being victimized by a scheme involving online job applications. The individuals have applied for and accepted jobs through an online job search service advertising "signing bonuses" of approximately \$2,500 to new hires. Each prospective employee had received a check ranging from \$19,000 to \$50,000 by mail from the prospective employer with instructions to deposit the check, preferably at an ATM. The recipient is further instructed to keep \$2,000 to \$4,000, depending upon the amount of the signing bonus, and return the balance of the money by wire to a location in Europe. The checks are fraudulent; therefore, the depositor is ultimately responsible for any amounts charged back to his or her account by the bank resulting from the dishonor of the checks. In some cases, banks have suffered losses when a customer has been unable to cover the overdrafts resulting from the dishonor and return of the fraudulent checks.

To date, we have only received copies of a few of the checks used in the scheme. Copies of those checks are attached for your information. The customer names and the names of the payees have been deleted to protect their privacy. Some of the checks bear the bank name and address of **Mercantile Bank**, 25 22nd Avenue North, St. Petersburg, FL 33704, and the names of various legitimate bank customers; however, the routing number on the checks (011002725) is assigned to the **Mercantile Bank and Trust Company**, Boston, Massachusetts. Other checks bear the bank name and address of various legitimate customers; however the routing numbers on the checks (011104322) and (044002909) are assigned to the **First City Bank**, New Britain, Connecticut, and **First City Bank**, Columbus, Ohio, respectively.

Any information you may have about these checks or this scheme should be immediately reported to the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The number may be found in your telephone book under U.S. Government, or on the FBI's Web site at <http://www.fbi.gov/contact/fo/info.htm>.

Information about these checks or similar items may be forwarded to the FDIC's Special Activities Section, 550 17th Street, NW, Room F-6012, Washington, DC 20429. Information may also be transmitted electronically to alert@fdic.gov.

For your reference, all FDIC Financial Institution Letters published since January of 1995 may be found on the FDIC's Web site at <http://www.fdic.gov> under "Newsroom, Events & FOIA." To learn how to automatically receive FDIC Financial Institution Letters through e-mail, please visit <http://www.fdic.gov/news/news/announcements/index.html>.

Please contact the Underwriting Department at the Georgia State Office at 800-328-2642 or 404-250-1604 if you have any questions.