

Verifying Your Applicant's Employment by Nick Sidoti, R.A.M.

Q. Dear Nick: I've been having trouble getting employers to verify employment and salary information over the phone. They all want me to send them a release of information *form*, signed by the tenant. My applicants don't want to wait more than a day or two to hear if they have been approved. And, sometimes I need the information immediately so that I can get a unit filled. Do you have any suggestions? George J., Flint, MI.

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A. Dear George: Tell the employer that you don't want them to give you any information. You just want them to verify the information that the tenant has given you. Then proceed immediately to make a statement such as the tenant states that he has been working for you for three years. Is that correct? He also states that he makes \$360 per week. Is that correct?' Usually this approach works pretty well. While you are doing this, you may want to grossly misstate something that the tenant has told you and see if the employer corrects you. This is a good way to see if the person you are talking to is really an employer, or if they are a setup.

The second thing that you can do, assuming that you have a release of information written into your rental application, is to ask the employer for their fax number and fax them the release of information. Now they have the paperwork they need to feel comfortable talking to you. Then call them back to verify the information the tenant has given you regarding employment. This is another good way to uncover a friend posing as the employer. If an "employer" doesn't have, or have access to a fax machine, it may be a warning sign of a setup. While we are on the subject of questioning employers, here are a few questions that you may find helpful, once you've gotten their cooperation....

- Are you currently garnishing any wages from this employee?
- Is there a good probability that this employee will be working for you for a while?
- Would you say that this is stable employment?
- Is this a year-round job?
- Is there any overtime included in the pay rate I've been given? If so, is the overtime temporary?
- Is there any possibility of this employee being transferred to another location or city?

I hope these ideas help.

P.S. It took some convincing for me to go out and get a fax machine, but it was definitely worthwhile. I hadn't gotten one earlier because I didn't think I needed it. Now that I have one, I realize how useful it is. I use it for contracts, to send information to my insurance agent, for verifying employment, to place an order with contractors, and to verify orders ('get it in writing' is much easier with a fax). I also use it for communicating with other investors from around the country. Some contact me regarding property management problems, and others with information related to United Property Owners of America. It is extremely useful to have something in print in front of you within minutes of when the person talked to you, rather than waiting days for the mail.

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