

# CLIENT ALERT

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## TRADEMARK SCAMS

by Bill Honaker, *The IP Guy*

Recently I've been receiving calls from clients in a panic. "I just got a call from an examiner at the USPTO. He said our trademark is expiring, and he needed a credit card for the renewal. Is this legit?"

The short answer is **NO! It's a scam.**

Do not respond to any phone calls about your trademark application or registration that asks for payment of a fee, or worse, your Social Security number, date of birth, or any other personal information.

The United States Patent and Trademark Office recently issued an [Alert](#) about this. Trademark applications are public information. Scammers are accessing this database and calling trademark registration applicants posing as Trademark Office employees. They request credit card information to pay fees, personal information to process your application, or add it to an "international registry" (it's bogus). They use a tactic called "spoofing," where they generate a fake caller ID to appear legitimate.

The USPTO will never call you requesting this kind of information. In fact, the USPTO will never request payment, your Social Security number, or any other personal information. Trademark fees must generally be paid using the [Trademark Electronic Application System](#) (TEAS) and are only accepted by fax or mail under rare circumstances such as a system outage. The USPTO doesn't take payment over the phone, and there is no reason for the USPTO to need your Social Security number when you file a trademark application.

This caution extends to text messages, emails, letters, or any other communication that asks you to send money or provide personal information.

I just read this on Instagram: "Three weeks ago, I bought a book online titled Scams, and it still hasn't arrived."

If you're uncertain, call your trademark lawyer. If you filed independently, you could call the [Trademark Assistance Center](#) at 1-800-786-9199 (press 1).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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