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Florida Steps up Fraud Fight With New Division of Investigative and Forensic Services

The Florida Department of Financial Services is enhancing its law enforcement strategy to fight fraud in the state by integrating its current units housed within DFS and forming the Division of Investigative and Forensic Services, according to a statement from Chief Financial Officer and State Fire Marshal Jeff Atwater.

Currently, three sworn law enforcement units operate under the direction of DFS, which is led by Atwater—the Division of Insurance Fraud, the Bureau of Fire and Arson Investigations, and the Office of Fiscal Integrity. To create greater efficiency and to streamline the way the DFS does business, these units were combined into the newly-formed Division of Investigative and Forensic Services, also known as DIFS, effective July 1, the statement said.

Previously housed in their separate divisions, the Division of Insurance Fraud, the Bureau of Fire and Arson Investigations, and the Office of Fiscal Integrity each serve an important function in Florida's fight against fraud. The Division of Insurance Fraud investigates reports of insurance fraud that drive up the cost of insurance rates in Florida; the Bureau of Fire and Arson Investigations examines signs of arson on fire scenes; and the Office of Fiscal Integrity addresses allegations of fraud, waste and abuse involving state funds.

According to Division Director Simon Blank, the ability for the division to share intelligence and resources is paramount as DFS adjusts its methods and adapts techniques to match ever-evolving crime.

“By combining forces, we’re able to extend our reach and do more to protect the people of Florida from falling victim to acts of insurance fraud, arson or the misuse of state funds,” Blank said.

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