



Firebird 24

Reborn From Our Ashes

NTEU Chapter 24 Newsletter

All Employees

****Special Edition****

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UNAX

-Ronald Woytalewicz

PLEASE READ

Even though you think you have never done nor ever will do something wrong, you need to read this. Chapter 24 has seen an explosion in the number of employees in Michigan being charged with UNAX violations. In my discussions with other Chapter Presidents across the country this explosion is occurring throughout the Service. After you read this I believe you will understand why.

I like to divide UNAX violations into two categories. The first category is fairly obvious and is for those things that most employees recognize as improper. Things such as pulling up celebrities not in your inventory; pulling up friends, neighbors, relatives, ex-spouses, for personal reasons; using the systems to find people and addresses for things like reunions; using the system to find someone's address rather than going to the phone book or some Internet site; etc. This category also includes the obvious situations you may have heard about, such as the employee who actually pulled up information to sell to an outside collection agency.

The second category is more subtle and more confusing. This category consists of those trying to help people and trying to do what they consider to be their jobs. Examples here include employees who are approached by friend, relatives, or neighbors who ask you to check on something for them, like refund status, payment postings, etc. You feel that you are just helping taxpayers like we were trained to do. However these days, this is considered a UNAX violation.

Another example is the taxpayer or representative from the past who contacts you about that old (closed) case or even to check on something new that has occurred. Your first impression might be to help this person; to provide good taxpayer service to someone who is no longer in your inventory but has a problem. Your first impression would be **wrong** – to help in this manner would be considered a UNAX violation. These are just two examples of employees trying to help taxpayers. Both of these situations have occurred in Michigan. We have even had an employee who pulled up information on a closed case in order to prepare a rebuttal to an evaluation being charged with a UNAX violation.

The Service is taking a much stricter approach to what it deems to be UNAX. If a taxpayer is not currently in your inventory or related to someone in your current inventory, you cannot have anything to do with that

taxpayer. Business reason does not equal tax administration; the Agency's position is the use of systems is for tax administration only.

The reason for all this concern is that if the Service charges you with an UNAX violation it will, invariably, recommend that you be fired. We have lost several employees this way.

In the first example above of helping with the refund or payment inquiry, you must "just say no". You must tell them to call toll-free or visit a walk-in office, because as much as you would like to help them, your job is more important. In the second example of the old taxpayer or representative from the past, tell them you are not permitted to help them and if they insist, transfer them to your manager.

You might wonder or realize at this point that employees have been doing the "helpful" things for some time but why are we now receiving an explosion in UNAX cases. The reason for the explosion is the dramatic increase in detection methods. The Service has been drawing upon and creating huge data bases of information regarding our employees. We have known for some time that the agency has input data off your original job application for personal references, past employers, relatives, etc. They also have your home address and an inquiry on a taxpayer on your street, the surrounding streets, and zip code will generate a blip on the agency's radar screen. We have also heard about the agency inputting information off your tax returns such as dependents, and bank account numbers. Another Chapter told me the agency uses Classmate.com and has all the people you ever graduated with in the database.

A couple of recent examples we had here in Michigan best illustrates how extensive the data bases are. In some recent TIGTA interviews, the TIGTA agent asked the employee why a taxpayer was pulled up on IDRS who worked at the same place as the employee's spouse. TIGTA also asked about an inquiry about a taxpayer whose child was at the same day care center as the employee. You can see the extent of the data bases the agency has. Big Brother is truly here when it comes to this area.

By this time, I hope I have raised your concern and perhaps scared you a little. If I have done so, then I have succeeded. Your job and the livelihood it provides to you and your family is much more important than helping some friend, neighbor, relative, taxpayer or representative from some closed case. You must place your job first and remember that "Service "is the last thing in our name. One stop service is dead.

Also remember that if you are ever called by TIGTA for an interview about UNAX or anything else, you need to immediately contact a Union Steward or call the Chapter office so that we can go with you. Please. Please. Just **don't do it**. I assure that the Chapter has all the work we need and we need all the employees we have.