

Dear Stewart Partners,

As always, we hope you, your colleagues, friends and family are staying healthy as we continue to navigate through 2021. It is the fall equinox, and autumn will officially begin at 3:20 this afternoon.

In this week's update, we want to share with you some information about a new kind of cyberattack which is making the rounds, called "Watering Hole Attacks." On the industry front, there are possible changes coming to 1031 like-kind exchanges that real estate investors need to monitor. In honor of the first day of autumn, we are giving you some information on where you can pick your own apples in Massachusetts. Lastly, because we know that we sometimes need to be reminded of taking time for ourselves during this unusually busy year, we are sharing information about a free webinar being offered by ALTA about managing stress and the importance of self-care.

- *Beware of Watering Hole Attacks!*

What is a "Watering Hole" attack?

These kinds of attacks trick users by infecting websites they typically visit (the watering hole) or find in industry-related searches. Hackers plant malicious files within other files that may at first seem benign. Unlike other forms of loan or real property fraud, these attackers are not targeting a specific victim. Instead, they use the watering hole to set their traps and then wait for any unsuspecting user to fall victim by opening one of these malicious files. Essentially, the cybercriminal is casting a wide net without any specific victim in mind, but at the same time targeting a specific industry.

Don't become a victim!

Becoming a victim is as easy as visiting a website (unfortunately)! The cybercriminals are targeting the real estate and settlement services industry by infecting existing websites that might provide templates or forms. In a recent attack that was publicized by the California Land Title Association, a paralegal searching for a UCC subordination on the internet came upon a university website that appeared to contain links to common forms. She selected a link that was a zip file hoping to download a form to use. The zip file turned out not to be a form, but a malicious script designed to infiltrate the network, steal data, and start a ransomware attack.

The internet provides a vast amount of reliable resources, but exercising caution when downloading files or selecting links on any site is a must. We recommend that you speak with your IT professional regularly to make sure that you have systems and protocols in place to minimize cybersecurity risk.

- *Proposed Changes to 1031 Like-Kind Exchanges*

One of the tax code changes proposed by the Biden administration involves reducing the benefits of like-kind exchanges under section 1031 of the code. The proposed change involves a cap on the amount of gain that can be deferred as part of the exchange. Because so many exchanges involve investment real estate, this change could significantly impact the real estate market. Last month, the Senate voted to remove this provision from the budget, and thereby preserve the status quo with respect to 1031 exchanges. ALTA, the National Association of

Realtors, and other real estate trade groups have voiced their continued support for preserving 1031 exchanges in a recent letter to Massachusetts Congressman Richard Neal, Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee. You can view a copy of the letter here: <https://www.alta.org/file.cfm?name=090821-Congressional-1031-Letter>.

- *It's Autumn in New England – Time to go Apple Picking!*

One of the great benefits of living in Massachusetts is the availability of pick-your-own apple orchards. Many orchards offer homemade cider, cider donuts, and wines as well. The Massachusetts Department of Agriculture offers an interactive map showing over 80 local orchards where you can pick your own fruit:

[https://massnrc.org/farmlocator/map.aspx?Type=PYO+\(Pick+Your+Own\)&Product=Apples](https://massnrc.org/farmlocator/map.aspx?Type=PYO+(Pick+Your+Own)&Product=Apples)

- *Free ALTA Webinar – Mental Health Matters in the Office, Too*

Alta is hosting a free webinar tomorrow, 9/23/2021. The program is designed to teach you how to “adopt preemptive strategies to fill your intellectual, physical and emotional buckets.”

To learn more about the webinar and to sign up, follow this

link: <https://www.alta.org/news/news.cfm?20210913-Mental-Health-Matters-in-the-Office-Too->

- *Stewart's Massachusetts COVID-19 Resource Page & Information Page – URL CHANGE*

Our easy reference page, which provides you quick access to all our Mid-Week updates, gap coverage affidavits, and bulletins that specifically relate to COVID and other emergency orders, has moved. Save this new URL as bookmark in your web browser for easy

access: <https://www.stewart.com/en/state-pages/massachusetts-agents/tools-and-resources/covid-19.html>

Stewart Title Guaranty Company - Massachusetts

200 5th Avenue, Suite 301, Waltham, MA 02451 Phone: 800-628-2988 Fax: 781-697-3336

Monarch Place - 1414 Main Street, Suite 1835, Springfield, MA 01144 Phone: 413-930-8090 Fax: 978-964-0565

Tiziano Doto, Agency Services Manager - tiziano.doto@stewart.com

Jutta R. Deeney, VP, State Counsel - jutta.deeney@stewart.com

Shannon Coleman, Underwriting Counsel - scoleman@stewart.com

Christine Provost, Associate Senior Underwriting Counsel - christine.provost@stewart.com

Tracie Kester, Underwriting Counsel - tracie.kester@stewart.com

Paula M. Cuculo, Underwriting Counsel - paula.cuculo@stewart.com

General MA Underwriting Mailbox - massuwing@stewart.com

Tracy Hawkins, Agency Sales Representative Sr. - tracy.hawkins@stewart.com

Rita Kelly-Parsley, Agency Sales Representative Sr. - rita.kelly-parsley@stewart.com

Tom Potito, Agency Sales Representative Sr. - tom.potito@stewart.com

Mary Blomerth, Agency Sales Representative Sr. - mary.blomerth@stewart.com

Lyslie A. DeMeo, Agency Sales Representative, Sr. - ldemeo@stewart.com