



Fake Lease, Real Consequences.

This case study shows the consequences of forging signatures on real estate documents. While the agent seemingly had good intentions, the Board takes allegations such as this very seriously.

The Situation

Broker Javy Lopez (“Lopez”) was employed by Cox Realty Company in Northern Virginia. Lopez had previously rented an apartment at 755 Hank Aaron Way (“Apartment”). The property was, and still is, managed by Mark Lemke (“Lemke”) of Chipper Property Management, Inc. Lopez moved out of state, at which time his son took over the lease at the property. Unbeknownst to Lemke, Lopez’s son was eight months behind on his power bill, at which point Dominion Energy shut off the power in January of 2024. Lemke received a call from Dominion asking if he had signed a new lease with Lopez. As he had not, he contacted Lopez for clarification.

The Investigation

Lemke called Lopez and asked about the new lease, which had what appeared to be Lemke’s signature as the Agent for the landlord. Lemke had not signed the lease. Lopez admitted that he had forged Lemke’s signature on the lease because his son owed more than \$800 in unpaid electric bills, and neither he nor his son had sufficient funds to pay the balance. Lopez hoped that Dominion would transfer the account into his name so that the power could be turned back on. Lopez indicated that at the time, temperatures were below freezing, and he was worried about his son getting sick without heat. Lopez stated that his intention was to call

Lemke and inform him of what Lopez had done, but because of a doctor's appointment he forgot to do so. His first contact with Lemke was when Lemke called after receiving the lease from Dominion.

At all points during the investigation, Lopez admitted to creating the fake lease and forging Lemke's name on it.

The Findings

The Initial Fact Finding by VREB staff found that Lopez did forge the lease with the intent to deceive Dominion, which is a violation of VAC 135-20-260.12.b. Regardless of his intentions, there is no circumstance where a licensee—particularly a broker—can fabricate documents and forge someone's name on them. The IFF recommended that the Board revoke Lopez's broker's license and immediately issue him a salesperson's license. Lopez was also ordered to be on probation for two years, during which time he and his broker would need to provide quarterly reports to the Board showing that he is in compliance with all rules and regulations. He was also ordered to complete thirty (30) hours of post-license CE. However, because his actions were not connected to a real estate transaction involving a client he represented, the Board imposed no monetary penalty.

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