

## Our Resolution: Zero Tolerance for Fraud in 2026

The start of a new year brings optimism and fresh goals, but it also marks one of the riskiest times for fraud. January is often referred to as the “**post-holiday fraud avalanche**” because fraudsters capitalize on lingering holiday-season vulnerabilities. According to [neuroID](#), fraud attack rates in January are 70% higher than the monthly average. Fraudsters know employees are returning from vacation, juggling multiple tasks, and responding to urgent requests. This perfect storm makes January a prime target for schemes like gift card fraud, phishing, payroll diversion, and vendor fraud.

### **Gift Card Fraud**

- Fraudsters pose as department heads or colleagues requesting urgent gift card purchases or financial help. Often, they use fake email addresses that closely resemble official ones, making them harder to detect.

### **Payroll Diversion Fraud**

- Attackers impersonate Human Resources or leadership, urging staff to update direct deposit information.

### **Phishing for Credentials**

- Fraudsters attempt to get users to share login or password information, often using emails. Emails mimic university portals, or IT notices with messages like “Account Deactivation” or “Update Required.”

### **Vendor & Procurement Fraud**

- Fraudsters submit fake invoices or impersonate vendors to change bank information to divert funds.

Internal Audit’s (IA) 2026 resolution is to educate. In FY 2025, IA delivered nine departmental presentations and sponsored two free webinars. We have started FY 2026 strongly, help us keep the momentum going! Here is how you can join the fight against fraud:

- ✓ Attend a free webinar hosted by IA
- ✓ Request or attend a fraud presentation for your department
- ✓ Attend an exciting game of Fraud Jeopardy coming to all three campuses in 2026
- ✓ Watch for opportunities to complete our new fraud puzzles
- ✓ Email [internal-audit@usf.edu](mailto:internal-audit@usf.edu) to join our mailing list

### **Where can I find more information?**

[USF Regulation 5.001](#): Fraud Prevention and Financial Detection

USF Office of Internal Audit website: <https://www.usf.edu/audit/>

### **How can I report potential fraud or abuse?**

Notify your supervisor

Contact the USF Office of Internal Audit at (813) 974-2705

Report activities anonymously through the [EthicsPoint](#) hotline at (866) 974-8411