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RIPTA Data Breach Affected About 22,000 People

By Associated Press on February 01, 2022

A data breach at the state agency that operates Rhode Island's public bus service compromised the personal information of about 22,000 people, agency officials said at a legislative hearing.

The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority shared documents at a Senate oversight committee hearing Monday night disclosing that of about those affected, 5,000 were RIPTA employees and some of the additional 17,000 were employees of other state agencies.

RIPTA mailed letters in December to the 22,000 people, the agency said Tuesday.

The agency said then that unauthorized access had been gained to some of its computer systems and that private information — including Social Security numbers and Medicare identification numbers — had been compromised.

The breach remains under investigation, both internally and by the state attorney general.

"At this point in time, we don't believe that anyone did anything wrong on our end, but we are still investigating it," RIPTA Chief Legal Counsel Steven Colantuono testified at the hearing.

RIPTA Director Scott Avedisian, speaking publicly for the first time about the breach, said much of the information compromised was contained in documents from the state's former health plan administrator, stored on unencrypted RIPTA servers.

Officials from the administrator were scheduled to testify at the hearing, but did not.

Patrick Crowley, secretary-treasurer of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO, said some union members affected by the breach have already reported their personal data has been misused.

RIPTA, in its statement Tuesday, said it has since boosted cybersecurity "by further enhancing our security protocols, document handling practices and cybersecurity training for our employees."

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