

Rental Scams Posted on the Internet

Consumers and REALTORS® have reported rental listings posted on Internet sites, such as Craigslist, which attempt to obtain a security deposit in advance even though the property is not a legitimate rental. The posting is simply a way to either get you to send a deposit or to provide your personal information to the perpetrator who posted the fake rental listing.

The posting often involves actual properties that are listed for sale with legitimate real estate brokerage firms. Typically property information, including photos, have been scraped from legitimate real estate sites and have been added to the illegal rental postings to add credibility to the ads.

Sometimes the posting is accompanied by fictitious missionary stories or stories about some emergency that has required the owner to leave the country. A myriad of stories have been noted to rationalize the situation; nonetheless, these stories are almost always unfounded. Beware of offerings asking less than the current rental market rates, “I was going to sell, but now I want to rent” and “drive by and look in the windows” statements, as well as “don’t call the real estate agent’s number on the sign” or “the former real estate agent sign” kind of stories. Most commonly the unsuspecting public will never have access to view the home.

Applications requesting personal and sensitive data and/or money order security deposits are required to “hold” the property. Often times these scams are being conducted from abroad, especially African countries, hence the need for the “missionary” stories to validate the foreign address.

These types of scams are designed to part the public with their money. There is rarely any intent to rent any property. Always contact the real estate firm from the sign in the yard, your local real estate agent, the Heartland REALTOR® Organization, or the local authorities if you have any concern or when the offer sounds too good to be true.

This information has been provided by the Heartland REALTOR® Organization as a courtesy; it is deemed reliable but subject to change. The REALTOR® Organization accepts no liability for the use of this information or the accuracy thereof. Please consult your legal counsel with any legal questions you may have.

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