

Beat: News

REAL ESTATE SCAMMERS USING APPLICATION TO STEAL YOUR IDENTITY

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USPA NEWS - Career criminals are always developing new ways to persuade consumer into freely turning over personal information. Most of these reprobates prey on the elderly and young people who are entering the marketplace for the first time.

The online real estate market has become a hotbed for criminal activity, where thieves have developed clever ways to get their hands on your personal information.

HCRN recently received complaints of criminals hijacking legitimate real estate listings and using them to lure potential buyers/renters into filling out online applications. People are turning over their social security numbers, birth dates, and current addresses, believing they are applying for a home. In some cases people are fooled into paying upwards of \$100 application fees; in essence, paying someone to steal your personal information.

"Gina Parelli tells HCRN that she nearly fell for one of these scams but when she realized what was happening she notified the actual real estate agent who listed the property.

Parelli says she played along with the scammers by listing that she had "8 kids, 10 dogs, and 10 cats" for a 2 bedroom home. She also said she was a heavy smoker and unemployed but that didn't deter the "agent." The response to her application was "perfect" and to wire the deposit money so that they could receive the keys.

Another sign of a real estate scam is when the price doesn't match the value; if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

HCRN responded to an ad on Craigslist for a beautiful home on Rudi Loop. The "agent" listed the home for rent at \$1,030.00, for a 3/2/2, in an exclusive deed restricted neighborhood. When we inquired, they quickly responded with an application and asked when we would be ready to move in.

We drove by the home and discovered that the home was actually listed with a local Remax agent. We immediately contacted that agent and informed him of the scam. This is the actual link to that fraudulent ad. <http://tampa.craigslist.org/hdo/apa/5665492841.html>

We notified the Sheriff's Office of the scam and asked what advice they could provide consumers.

Sgt. Kelly Brown of the Economic Crimes Division says "The Craigslist scam is becoming more common, not only in solicitation of personal information, but also as a means to scam cash deposits from potential buyers and renters. Another real estate scam on the rise is the hacking of realtors' email accounts where the customer thinks they are communicating with their agent and are asked to wire money for the sale of a home. In both cases we urge potential buyers and renters to do their homework on the properties that they are interested in such as property searches through Hernando County Government websites, commercial real estate sites and the Hernando Realtor's Association. We also discourage buyers from relying on email communication with their agents without personal verification of any transaction."

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-8543/real-estate-scammers-using-application-to-steal-your-identity.html>

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