

City of Warrenton Police



Mathew J. Workman, Chief of Police

WPD SCAM ALERT 16-01



Type: Craigslist Rental Scam

Local Occurrences: WPD has three (3) reports so far

Background: The Warrenton Police Department has received three calls from citizens where someone has posted a house "for rent" on Craigslist but the house is actually "for sale" and the poster is a scammer. So far no one has reported sending the scammer any money or sharing any personal information but that is what they are trying to obtain.

What To Do: If you have a property "for sale" and find it is listed "for rent" contact the site where it is listed immediately and flag it for removal. You can also report the incident to the WPD or the police in the area of the property for follow-up but it is extremely difficult to locate these suspects as they use pre-paid phones and are often out of the country.

Consumer Tips: (from scambusters.org)

Often, your instinct will let you know there's something not quite right about a proposed rental deal, but here are 12 tell-tale signs that suggest something's amiss:

General (typical of a Nigerian scam):

1. Communication is exclusively by email or cell phone.
2. The "owner" or "renter" claims to be out of the country.
3. Communication is urgent — the person seems in a hurry to close the deal immediately.
4. Messages use poor spelling and grammar and, frequently, religious terms like "God Bless."

For Renters:

5. The house has a "For Sale" but not a "For Rent" sign.
6. The lock box is broken or the "agent" appears to have his own, different key to let you in.
7. The "owner" or "managing agent" is based out of town.
8. The home appears to contain someone else's personal belongings.
9. The rental sum is lower than the going rate for the locality.

For Owners:

10. The inquirer asks questions that are already answered in your flyer or ad (like when the place is available or what the rent will be).
11. The "renter" claims he's prepared to take the deal sight-unseen (usually a prelude to an advance fee scam).
12. The "renter" requests that you buy things or hire a contractor to do some work on the place first (usually the scammer is the "contractor").

REMEMBER! If the deal sounds too good to be true it probably is. Always confirm ownership and do your research. **NEVER** wire money to someone you don't know or have verified.

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