



## OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY

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### PRESS RELEASE

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### **Craigslist Rental Scam / Realtor Identity Theft**

The San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office wishes to alert the public and all real estate professionals of a new realty scam that has been recently discovered by District Attorney Investigators of the Real Estate Fraud Unit.

The scam goes as follows: A Real Estate Agent has a home listed for sale on the Multiple Listing Service as a "short sale". The MLS posting contains the Agent's name, contact information, photographs, and a detailed description of the home.

First, the Perpetrator takes the name of Agent and creates a false Yahoo email account using the Agent name. Next, the Perpetrator copies the photographs of the home and other information from the Agent's MLS listing and creates a new advertisement on Craigslist. Interested renters who visit the site are asked to reply to the false Yahoo email address. When the prospective renter makes contact by email, the Perpetrator responds by claiming he/she needs "someone to take care of my house while I am out of the country", and offers to lease the property immediately upon payment of \$800 advance rent and a \$650 security fee.

People looking to rent should be aware of the following "red flags": (1) beware when the sole means of communicating with the landlord or agent is via internet; (2) the homeowner or landlord claims to be traveling or out of the country; and (3) requests for money to be sent or wired out of the country. In addition, before renting or paying any money, renters should: (4) request a walk-through of the property; (5) meet the landlord or agent in person; and (6) when considering renting a property listed on the internet, cross check the address with the local MLS listing or consult with a local real estate agent.

Real estate professionals and members of the public with additional information may contact Lieutenant Robert Buchwalter at the San Joaquin County District Attorney Investigations Bureau, (209) 468-3637.