

Craigslist Real Estate Listing Scam Advisory

Recently, a property for sale listed by a local agency had its listing “reposted” on Craigslist as rental. This is a common scam that is beginning to surface in New Hampshire. These schemes cause grief in several ways. First, the potential seller--who has paid a reputable real estate broker to sell his house-- is hassled by “potential renters” from the false post. Second, the broker selling the ad has their posting stolen and listed as a rental which may affect its selling potential. Third, the prospective renter usually gets scammed out of his or her deposit money.

The scam is usually conducted the same way each time. A real estate listing is copied from a broker’s website and is reposted on Craigslist as a rental property. The false “owner” claims he is on missionary work in Africa with his family and he is looking to rent the house while he and his family are away. Once emails are received from prospective renters, the scammer asks for a “deposit” to hold the house due to the popularity of the advertisement. The scammer asks for the deposit to be sent by Western Union to an African address. Once the money is received, the advertisement is pulled and the scammer moves his con to another market. This scam is particularly successful in resort towns with a high demand for seasonal rentals.

Should you discover one of your listings reposted on Craigslist, immediately “Flag” the posting as “prohibited” and Craigslist will immediately remove the post. This is the most effective way to deal with this issue. It is not advised to engage in an email dialogue with scammer as this usually encourages the scammer to continue this scheme. Please review the Craigslist Safety page for tips recognizing suspected scams: <http://www.craigslist.org/about/scams>

The Lincoln Police Department is advising real estate agencies to frequently review Craigslist to ensure that their legitimate listings have not been “poached” by con artists. Many real estate agencies are using “watermarks” on their internet photographs to prevent re-use by unauthorized use. If you have any questions or need assistance “flagging” illegitimate postings feel free to call Officer David Kratz at the Lincoln Police Department, 745- 2238.