

A L E R T

Rental Scam August 19, 2009

The below alert is being circulated by law enforcement regarding the listing and selling of homes via the internet. Nigerian scammers are obtaining home information and then use that information to post the home on Craigslist under available housing rentals.

If you or a real estate agent is listing property on the internet you should be aware of this scam and take the appropriate steps to protect yourself.

For additional information regarding scams please speak with a Bank representative.

We have been advised that homeowners list their homes for sale with real estate agents, who will list the homes for sale in the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) and also with public search websites, which allow individuals to query homes for sale via the Internet. Nigerian scammers find homes listed for sale on these public search sites, copy the pictures and listings verbatim, and then post the information onto Craigslist under available housing rentals, without the consent or knowledge of Craigslist, who has been notified.

After the posting is listed, unsuspecting individuals contact the poster, who is Nigerian, for more information on the “rental.” The Nigerian scammer will state that they had to leave the country very quickly to do missionary or contract work in Africa and were unable to rent their house before leaving, therefore they have to take care of this remotely. The “homeowner” sends the prospective renter an application and tells them to send them first and last month’s rent to the Nigerian scammer via [Western Union](#). The prospective renter is further told if they “qualify,” they will send them the keys for their house. Once the money is wired to the scammer, they show up at the house, see the home is actually for sale, are unable to access the property, and their money is gone.

Individuals that have complaints similar to this should file an internet crime complaint on www.ic3.gov to ensure the extent of this scheme can be accurately evaluated.