



COUNTY OF YOLO
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Scam Alert: Yolo County DA's Office Warns Residents about Rental Scams

(Woodland, CA) – July 10, 2018 - Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig is warning residents to be cautious of rental unit scams targeting individuals who are looking for rental property. The Yolo County Housing Authority recently reported seeing a number of these scams throughout the county. Scammers advertise rental properties slightly below the normal market value, which can be a red flag since a deal that is almost too good to be true, usually is. The scammers will often ask for money up front and say that they cannot show the property at the moment, but will show it in the very near future. They request that the renter mail or wire them the first month's rent and security deposit up front. Scammers never show or rent the property and keep the deposit. Often these scammers target Housing Choice Voucher participants, however anyone can fall prey to these scams.

In a recent case reported to the District Attorney, the Housing Choice Voucher program participant believed she found a very affordable house in the area. She paid a \$900 security deposit with a money order deposited into a bank account. The Yolo County Housing Authority advised the participant that this might be a scam since the value of the security deposit and rent was far less than normal market value. The Money Order company also contacted the participant to inform her that the account where she sent the payment was closed. Luckily, they were able to refund her money. In this sophisticated scheme, scammers used the participant's Facebook profile to learn about her, and they pretended to know her friends, family, and the pastor of her church when they offered the unit to her. This made the participant feel comfortable talking with the scammer since they pretended to be in her inner circle of friends.

Please be vigilant about scams like this by doing the following: 1) Never provide any personal information and never “wire” any money; 2) Never give money up front for a property you have not seen; 3) Never hesitate to ask a trusted friend, advisor, or professional for help before responding to rental offers; 4) Make sure your social media account settings are on private so that scammers cannot research you and your friends.

According to DA Jeff Reisig, “These unique types of scams have increased in recent months. The best defense against becoming a victim of such a scam is to be educated and aware.”

For more information about this and other types of scams or to report suspected scams to the Yolo County District Attorney, please call the Real Estate Fraud Department at (530) 666-8471 or the Fraud Hotline at 855-4-YOLO-DA or visit Yoloda.org.

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