Online Rental Scams

Online rentals scams are common. Here is some useful information to help you detect, avoid, and report a rental scam.

How to Detect a Rental Scam

- Rental amount is unusually low in comparison to the average rates for the area
- Landlord is unable to show you the rental
- Landlord claims to be out of town, state, or country
- There is a sense of urgency
- There are requests made of advanced payments through wiring, cashier’s check, money order, escrow service, Western Union, or MoneyGram
- Landlord does not ask for rental application or reference check
- A third party is involved
- Ad and/or correspondence has misspellings
- Excessive use of capitalization
- E-mail is from a free e-mail provider such as yahoo or gmail
- A landlord claims to own a unit in an apartment complex

How to Avoid a Rental Scam

- Never wire money, nor pay money in advance of seeing the rental
- Always meet the landlord or property manager in person before signing rental documents or sending money
- Never give out bank account information
- Contact the county assessor’s office to look up property ownership [http://www.sfassessor.org/](http://www.sfassessor.org/)
- Do a web search of the landlord’s name

How to Report a Rental Scam

- Call the Federal Trade Commission Consumer Response Center toll-free hotline: 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357)
- FTC online complaint form: https://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov
- Internet Crime Complaint Center: [www.ic3.gov](http://www.ic3.gov)

For more information about rental scams, please visit: [http://rentalscams.org/](http://rentalscams.org/)