

Rental scam

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Scammers create fraudulent classified ads, often online, for rentals available in a preferred location. Ads are usually posted with a below average asking price to ensure a "quick sale." Scammers give interested consumers a rental questionnaire, which asks for personal information including: banking details, contact information, occupation, income and more.

Scammers portray themselves as landlords currently working overseas. They say that the rent is at a discounted rate to get good tenants who will "take care" of the property while they are away on business. Scammers also explain how showings/tours of the property are unavailable but a full refund can be given if the rental does not meet the consumer's satisfaction.

Once an offer is "accepted", consumers must send first and last months' rent (either by a money service business, email money transfer or bank wire) in exchange for the keys. The keys are promised to be express mailed to the tenant's current address. No keys are ever sent, nor is a rental available by the scammer. Victims are given many reasons to send extra funds (security deposit, pay for more months at a discounted rate). Victims are eventually made aware of the fraud and ads are quickly deleted and communication with the suspect is terminated.

Warning Signs – How to Protect Yourself

When searching for rentals, go to the address. Schedule a showing and confirm its availability. Request a lease/contract. Review it thoroughly.

Complete open source searches on rental addresses to ensure it's not a duplicate post.

Do not send funds to strangers.

Contact Equifax and Transunion if you've provided sensitive information on applications.

Go with your gut. If it seems fishy it probably is.

Source: <http://www.antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca/fraud-escroquerie/rent-location-eng.htm>

Advice for Renters

Avoid ads that are "too good to be true." Ads for apartments in big cities such as Edmonton with rents significantly below market value are almost always lures used by scam artists. Check other listings in the general area and see what the going rates for apartments are before responding.

Always see the apartment in person before sending any money or providing personal information such as your social security number, even if it's just to fill out an application. Under no circumstances should you do business with an overseas landlord unless you have personally verified their identity and that they actually own the apartment advertised.

Dealing locally is best. The safest way to deal is in person and face to face. Be wary if the prospective landlord only wants to communicate via e-mail. Be more wary if the landlord is

currently out of the country or resides overseas or far from where the apartment is located. Be extremely wary if the landlord flat out refuses to talk on the phone or claims they cannot talk on the phone.

Exercise extreme caution before wiring deposits or rent payments using Western Union or MoneyGram, especially to foreign countries. Sending money in any form overseas will likely result in losing all of it. Western Union and MoneyGram are very popular for Internet scams because the funds are available instantly, untraceably and worldwide.

Scan any attachments from landlords with anti-virus software before opening. One of the latest scams involves a "landlord" e-mailing an unsuspecting renter additional photos of the apartment for lease. However, one or more of the e-mail attachments contains a virus that can fool your Web browser to make it appear as though you're going to a legitimate site but in fact are being sent to a site controlled by the scammer. The best way to protect yourself is by using commercial anti-virus software, keeping it up to date and by scanning all e-mail attachments before opening or double-clicking them.

Commercial Web-based e-mail services such as Yahoo! Mail and Hotmail provide virus-scanning services free of charge.

source: https://www.rentboard.ca/renter/fraud_and_scams.aspx