TALKING ABOUT

Seniors vs. Crime

Vacation Rental Scams Target Unaware Travelers

Plenty of people are booking vacation rental properties this time of year, and the Federal Trade Commission says scammers are taking advantage of that with fake vacation rental ads.

How does this scam work?

Some scammers use real rental listings and remove the real owner's contact information and replace it with their own, and then they put the property on another vacation rental site. Others hijack the email accounts of property owners or reputable property rental websites. Sometimes, the scammers make up fake listings for places not actually for rent or that don't exist.

Victims book and pay for these phony vacation properties, and when they show up for vacation, they have no place to stay and their money is gone.

How do I protect myself?

Be cautious if a property is offered for much lower than average and promises great amenities, because sometimes that's a tactic to get people to pay for the fake rental before they figure out the truth. Look out for unbelievably cheap rates on premium vacation properties.

Don't pay for a vacation rental by wiring money or with a prepaid gift card, because both of those forms of payment are nearly impossible to track and get back.

Take your time and don't be rushed into a decision for a rental property. Be suspicious of anyone who tries to rush you.

Get a copy of the contract before paying any deposit money. Look up the address and make sure it is real.

What if I'm a victim?

Always report all scams and fraud to your local law enforcement agency's non-emergency number. If you believe someone is in danger, call 911. Report all scams and financial abuse to the state attorney general, and file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at ftc.gov/complaint.

Seniors vs. Crime Offices

8035 E. County Road 466, Suite C, at the Sumter County Villages Annex. Hours: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. 352-689-4600, ext. 4606

2722 Brownwood Blvd. Hours: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays. 352-750-1914

8230 SE 165th Mulberry Lane. Hours: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays. 352-753-7775

3000 Moyer Loop. Hours: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesdays. 352-674-1882