

CAUTION: Potential Rental Scams

It has been brought to our attention that local landlords and property managers are being hit with rental scams of late. The communication is via email from someone out of the states (UK, Australia, Kenya, to name a few) wanting a place or room to rent.

Essentially, the potential renter usually has some kind of money transaction problem and has a "friend" or intermediary in the states step in to send a money order. Sometimes the amount being sent is OVER the required deposit amount. Before the landlord finds out that the money orders/traveler's checks are fraudulent, the potential renter has backed out of renting the unit for some reason and has asked for the deposit or overage back.

Although we want to stress that there are genuine requests for rental housing coming from abroad, we offer the following information as suggestions to determine the legitimacy of the requests.

Things to watch for:

- The emails usually have notable grammatical errors.
- The "story" he/she tells often times has a sense of urgency about it, needing to find housing within the next month; sometimes the story has inconsistencies as well.
- The interested renter wants to use an intermediary or friend to make payment.

Suggestions on how to avoid a rental scam:

- Never accept more payment than the amount you request
- Always ask for references
- Google the potential renter's name and see if anything comes up of concern
- Avoid renting sight unseen. If you have to rent before inspecting the property and meeting the landlord, check with Student Legal Services first in 284 Lory Student Center **(970)491-1482**.
- Inspect the money orders by holding a note up to the light, and look for a watermark picture of Ben Franklin on the left side. There should also be a dark security thread running to the right of the watermark, with the tiny letters "USPS" facing backward and forward. You can also take the money orders to the nearest post office for examination.

Counterfeiting is a felony, punishable with a fine of up to \$500,000 and up to five years imprisonment.

To report a postal money order scam: call the local post office or Postal Inspectors at (303)313-5320. To report a fraud complaint, call the Fraud Complaint Hotline at 1-800-372-8347 or visit the U.S. Postal Inspection Service Web site at www.usps.com/postalinspectors.

EXAMPLE OF A SUSPICIOUS INQUIRY:

Hello, I'm a Medical Practitioner based in the London, United Kingdom and i saw your apartment advertised on the internet for rent and i want to rent it. I and my family (Wife) want to relocate to the United States by next Month and we will want to rent this apartment for at least one year.

Please i need you to forward me the full description of the Apartment and the Utilities available inside. I intend to bring some of my furnitures into the house and i am already making arrangement with a furniture company to supply them. Do i need to pay a security deposit? How many month's rent will i be required to pay? Also what will be your final asking price for this apartment for a Month? Nevertheless, My financier based in United State of America will handle the payment on our behalf before we move in to the apartment and we intend to move into this apartment by next Month. Awaiting for your quick response.

Subject: I am intrested

Hi Greeting to you. i would like to rent an Apartment or ROOMS from you. I have checked the profile to the Apartment or ROOMS and i will want to rent,Pls do send me details of the PLACE to my account (removed) or (removed) make the subject ROOM TO RENT,so i can pick it out from bulk mails i receive everyday. If you also have any avaiable pictures you send it as well when you are replying your next mail. Hope to hear from you soon.