

Warning: Be wary of property tax mailings

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado County Assessor Karl Weiland advises residents to be wary of mailers offering to reduce property taxes for a fee, noting that property owners can obtain the same tax relief free of charge.

The latest mailer, from Property Tax Assessor Records Corp., offers to assist homeowners in obtaining a homeowner's exemption for \$25. The reverse side of the mailer offers additional information on comparable sales along with an offer to provide a customized report, again for a fee, according to a news release from the Assessors Office.

Weiland suggested that any property owner who receives a solicitation offering help with property taxes should contact the Assessor's Office to make sure the service is not available for free.

In 2007, property owners received an official-looking notice that solicited a payment of \$189 before the deadline and \$209 afterwards. The mailers included an unrealistic value and implied significant savings. The owners of the Southern California company were subsequently charged with mail fraud and deceptive business practices.

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