

# **Tourists being scammed by fake vacation rental owners**

South Lake Tahoe police officers are advising vacation homeowners, rental companies, and future visitors to the area of a scam over the Internet through vacation rental websites.

At least three families have been victimized by this scam recently, and it is suspected there may be more.

The scam involves false postings on legitimate vacation rental websites advertising rental properties available in South Lake Tahoe. They include photographs of residences in the area, which make the postings appear authentic.

Typically a victim contacts the suspect(s) via email through such a website, and the suspect emails realistic appearing rental agreements with an out of state bank account number, and routing number for the victim to send money. The suspect then has the victim wire transfer the money, which makes it non-refundable to the victim by a bank. The victim then sends the money unknowingly to the suspect(s), thinking they have a reservation for the property.

They arrive at their destination to discover that the transaction was fraudulent and they have been scammed out of their money.

The thieves have used accounts in multiple states and have used different names, both male and female. One common denominator is that a cell phone number of (940) 238.4477 is listed on the rental agreement.

If anyone is a victim of these suspect(s), contact Officer Mark Hounsell at (530) 542.6100.