

Vacation rental scams targeting SLT properties

The South Lake Tahoe Police Department is warning potential vacation home renters of an ongoing scam on Craigslist.

These listings may include pictures and a lengthy description of a real house. Unsuspecting vacationers are paying in advance, usually by check or Western Union wire. The supposed landlord takes receipt of the money and when the victim shows up to the vacation rental, they find that the home is occupied by a permanent resident or that there are other renters in the home.

Other techniques being used are asking unsuspecting renters to deposit money directly into a bank account and then that bank account is closed out. People are also being asked to buy gift cards and provide the card numbers to the scammers.

In an effort to avoid being scammed while renting a vacation home:

- Use a credit card. Never use bank wires, certified checks, Western Union, or any other service where the money is gone forever immediately after you send it.
- Obtain full contact info and verify it by using Google search or the like. If dealing with a person, ask for references, especially full work contact info, and verify that contact info.
- If they always have to call you back, be suspicious. When they call, ask for a phone number where you can immediately call them back. If they don't pick up the phone, watch out. Be aware that many scammers use message services.
- If you are a victim of a vacation rental scam, contact the South Lake Tahoe Police Department at 530.542.6100.