NEW YORK STATE

Department of State
Consumer Protection

Navigating Housing Scams

A FIVE PART SERIES

Part 1: Rentals Scams

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Navigating Housing Scams

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2022, the FBI received **11,727** real estate/rental scam-related complaints, with losses of over **$396 million,** an **86%** increase compared to 2020.

Whether New Yorkers are renting, buying a first home, protecting their homes, planning a home improvement project, or looking for a moving or storage company, The Division of Consumer Protection provides tips to navigate scams and prevent you from falling victim to a scam.

In part one of a five-part money-saving series, we offer practical tips for navigating rental scams.

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Tips To Prevent A Costly Mistake:

Confirm that the rental listing is legitimate and verify the source of the listing.

- Visit real estate websites and see if the rental you want is also listed in another city or available on another website with a different email address.

- Run a reverse image search and see if you can find that listing anywhere on the internet. If you find an identical listing with a different email address, that's a red flag that it's a scam.

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Tips To Prevent A Costly Mistake:

Verify the identity of any Real Estate Professional.
Confirm that the real estate professional you're working with is licensed in New York by following these steps:

- **Visit the New York State Department of State Public License Search Database**

- Conduct an independent online search and check the phone number associated with their real estate license address. Call the number to verify.

- Request to see a copy of the Department of State-issued photo license and arrange an in-person or video meeting to compare the ID.

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Take these additional steps to avoid rental scams:

- **Inspect the Premises:** Avoid completing background checks, signing a lease agreement, or paying any advance fees or deposits before having an opportunity to inspect the premises.
- **Be suspicious of untraceable payment methods.** Instead, pay by check or credit card and get receipts for any payments.
- **Request everything in writing.** Real estate professionals are required by law to provide you with copies of all instruments relating to the transaction.

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Take these additional steps to avoid rental scams:

- **Don’t give in to high-pressure sales tactics.** Scammers may urge you to rent quickly before someone else gets the property, possibly prompting you to miss an important step in the evaluation process.

- **Protect your privacy.** Scammers often request personal information and money for background checks, then disappear. Refrain from providing personal information or your social security number unless you are sure you are dealing with a reputable business or agent.

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