



Courtesy of
Tom Levitt
Broker, BRE 01256619
714-264-5964
tom@tomlevitt.com

Real Estate Fraud Alert

Real estate fraud is a form of theft criminals may use to steal your home, real estate holdings or the equity in your property. Real estate fraud is on the rise throughout the county and can take many forms. Your best protection against fraud is to be aware of the warning signs, and report any suspicious activity or transactions against your property.

Common Real Property Frauds

Home Equity/Identity Fraud - A forged deed is recorded to give the appearance that the perpetrator has acquired ownership of a property. The perpetrator uses the equity in the property as collateral to borrow money. No payments are made on the new loan(s), and the true owner could face foreclosure.

Home Renovation/Mortgage Fraud - Contractors offer to do home improvement work or lenders offer special "low-interest" financing, but do not deliver what was promised. Homeowners are left with partially complete or substandard construction, or a mortgage payment that is higher than expected.

Real Estate Investment/Foreclosure Fraud - Investors are lured into buying property that is supposedly facing foreclosure for pennies on the dollar. Quitclaim deeds and other documents are forged to give the appearance that a property is being sold to avoid foreclosure.

Short Sales/Federal Loan Fraud - Transactions are completed by individual(s) practicing real estate without a license. Often fees are collected in advance, and property values are under-reported at the expense of lenders.

Common Warning Signs

Missing Property Value Notice Or Tax Bill - A missing property value notice or property tax bill can be the first signs of a Home Equity Fraud. The Assessor mails property value notices in July, and the Tax Collector mails the bills in September. Call the Assessor at (714) 834-2727 if you do not receive a notice, or the Tax Collector at (714) 834-3411 if you do not receive a tax bill.

You Are Notified That A Property Document Has Been Recorded - The County Clerk-Recorder sends notification to property owners when a document is filed against their property. If you did not initiate the document filing, contact your local police department or the O. C. Sheriff at (714) 647-7040.

Loan Papers Or Payment Booklets - If you receive documents for a loan you did not apply for, notify the lender immediately.

An "Investment" That Sounds Too Good To Be True - Use good judgment and do your research.

Additional Resources

Orange County District Attorney, Economic Crimes Unit - (714) 834-3600

State of California, Department of Real Estate - (213) 620-2072

Orange County Consumer Fraud Hotline - (714) 347-8706