

OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

CHRISTIE STANLEY
District Attorney



DA 04-0022

RELEASE NUMBER

April 3, 2009

RELEASE DATE

APPROVED BY

David Saunders, Chief Investigator

CONTACT PERSON (805) 568-2359

***** **P R E S S R E L E A S E** *****

April 3, 2009

The District Attorney's Office recently became aware of a fraudulent rental scam which could affect citizens of Santa Barbara County. The scam involves advertisements on Craigslist for rental apartments in the Santa Barbara/Goleta areas. When potential renters make email contact regarding the advertised properties, they are told that the property owners are out of the country (often in West Africa and Nigeria) and that a "rental application" (containing much personal information) will be needed in order to complete the rental process.

The District Attorney's Office is warning citizens not to become victims of rental scams. To avoid such scams, remember:

- If it looks too good to be true, it probably is.
- Research the property.
- Check with the Clerk-Recorder's office to see who owns the property.
- If the landlord keeps their distance, refusing to offer phone numbers or contact information, consider that a "red flag."
- Never wire money to an unfamiliar person or company to rent property.
- Report fraudulent online advertisements to the site on which they are posted.
- Consumers who have encountered this scam may file a complaint online with the Internet Crime Complaint Center (<http://www.ic3.gov>).

The District Attorney's Office asks anyone with information about potential rental scams to contact the District Attorney's Real Estate Fraud Unit at 805-737-7760.