



Safety & Security Tip

FROM THE OFFICE OF LEE COUNTY SHERIFF MIKE SCOTT

One Scam Sure To Ruin Your Summer Vacation Plans

Are you busy planning your summer vacation and looking for just the right deal to fit your budget? These days, consumers are flooded with a boatload of choices when it comes to finding the perfect place for a summer get-a-way. Many of us will turn to the internet, a budget conscious planner's best friend, to help us find everything from airline tickets to summer beach rentals. You might think the worldwide web is the perfect place to find paradise, but beware; what you think is a good deal could really be a scammer trying to steal your cash or credit card number.

The online summer vacation rental scam goes something like this: Con artists will cut and paste a legitimate ad from Craigslist or another website, attract attention by adding a bargain basement rental price, include a fake email address, and then ask prospective renters to wire transfer money or load cash on a prepaid debit card for a security deposit. Unfortunately, it is easy to get caught up in the attractive price, beautiful photos and description of the property along with the promise that this "deal" won't last. If you come across an online vacation rental that sounds too good to be true, here's what you should do:

1. **Look up the owner.** You can seek out the real owner and their contact information by looking up the property on the county property appraiser's website in which the rental is located. A Google image search is also a good idea as well as checking online for negative information related to the listing/owner.
2. **Talk to the person.** Don't rely on e-mail correspondence, instead talk to the person on the phone and if they are unable or unwilling to do so, it could be a scam.
3. **Be suspicious.** Does the owner have a free e-mail service rather than one that indicates an established relationship with a utility company? Do they claim to be outside of the United States?
4. **Pay by credit card.** Never pay via wire or bank account transfer, or with your debit card. These methods immediately put the money in the scammer's hands and also are difficult to recover. Credit cards offer more protection in the event the listing is fraudulent.
5. **Consider using a reputable travel agency or referral from friends or family.**

If you have questions regarding online rental scams, or if you would like to report a scam or fraud, contact the Sheriff's Office fraud line at 258-3292.



The logo for Abby Services, Inc. features the company name in a stylized, cursive font. Below the name is a graphic of a green map of Florida with a yellow bell icon. The text "Home Health Care" is positioned above the slogan "Great Caregivers. Great Service. Great Price." The phone number "239-590-0861" and the website "www.AbbbyServices.com" are listed at the bottom.

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