

WARNING: Don't Be Fooled By Internet Rental Scams!
by Patricia A. Harris

Times are tough, vacancies are high. Your unit has been available for two months and you need it rented as soon as possible. You have no prospects. And then you get an email like the one I received below. ***Don't for one minute think its real.*** I have left this email unedited and in the exact format it was received as most of these scammers write in a similar fashion:

*Hello
i am mr jonathan yao and i would like to rent your property for a stay in your country,
i will come with my wife and two kids to occupy the property.
i intend to come to your country on 5th April 2010 and i would like to rent your property for the period from 5th April 2010 to 5th April 2011
if you have availability, please inform me and send me a quote by email indicating the total amount of my rent.
and i have giving you all my information for the preparation of the lease that you are going to send me also:*

*Jonathan yao.
11 bp 2234 abidjan 11.
Cocody riviera 2*

*regarding to the payment i would like to do so in advance to confirm the property and also you can assure me well until i arrived to your country.
i intend to make the payment in advance by bank transfer if you do not see incovenient and therefore you will send me your bank details to pay the full rental payment on your account to confirm the property.
if you have availability so please send me email with the estimated total amount of the rent over the contract for the rental and your bank account for the payment.*

*Regards
Mr Jonathan*

If you bought into this and gave “Mr. Jonathan” your bank account information – monies would not be transferred into your account, instead, your “new tenant” would immediately siphon all of your funds and most likely have dinner “on you” somewhere in Nigeria.

Another popular scam is that the person claims to be transferring from another country for work. They actually send you a cashier's check for the first month's rent and security. You deposit it in your bank and heave a sigh of relief that you finally rented that vacancy.

A few days later, the prospective tenant informs you that his boss transferred him to another country and he would like you to send his money back – or better yet – to his new landlord in Wisconsin. So, you write a personal check or get another cashier's check and mail it to him and move on. No harm, no foul, right?

The following week you will receive a notice from your bank that the original cashier's check you deposited from him was not real, they've charged your account and you realize that you just got taken for a few thousand dollars. You will never recoup this loss and you will never catch up with the thieves.

Here are a few things to remember:

- Be wary of someone from another country, specifically England or Nigeria coming to the U.S. on a work project. They claim their company will be funding their move. You may even get a letter from their "boss".
- NEVER, NEVER, NEVER give out your banking information to anyone.

Always get an application completed in full and run it through the proper screening process. If you can't verify someone's existence, you can bet the cashier's check you receive is also not real.