

SUNDAY READY TO RENT

The Washington Post

YOUR GUIDE TO RENTAL APARTMENTS • HOUSES • AND MORE • SUNDAY, MARCH 20, 2011



You can
trust me!

Avoiding Rental Scams



Photo by Dave Kennedy

If you think you've hit the jackpot because you found an apartment rental listing with an incredibly affordable monthly payment, you'd be best to call this saying to mind: "If it's too good to be true, it probably is."

The number of rental scams continues to increase in volume every year, and according to rentalscams.org which tracks these trends, Washington, D.C., ranks in the top 10 cities in U.S. with the most rental scams.

Continued on page 3.

FEATURED ADVERTISERS

Paradigm Management | ResidencesCongressionalVillageWP.com Page 2

Grady Management | www.gradymgt.com Page 3

Southern Management | www.southernmanagement.com Back Cover

Avoiding rental scams

Continued from cover.

"Larger cities equal more potential renters to scam" says Dan Daugherty, CEO of rentbits.com. "And cities like Washington, DC have higher rents; therefore, a scam that lowers the rent is more attractive to renters."

According to the Federal Trade Commission, one of the most common rental scams involves a scammer copying an ad from a rental site and reposting the ad at a significantly lower rental price. Interested people respond via e-mail. The scammer claims to be out of the country for work and requires the person to wire a down deposit to secure the rental. In return for the money, the scammer promises to send the keys to the property and assures the renter that if he's unhappy, the money will be refunded. Unfortunately, once the wire is sent, the money is gone. The scam is complete.

In some cases, agents of the money transfer company have been in on the fraud. The FTC found that between 2004 and 2008, agents of one wire transfer company helped fraudulent telemarketers and other con artists trick U.S. consumers into wiring more than \$84 million within the United States and to Canada alone.

How you can avoid becoming a victim?

1. Be suspicious if rates are abnormally low. Experts say the first warning sign of a possible scam is the below market listing price. Do some research by checking reliable rental sites and local newspapers to determine whether the listing price is on the mark.
2. Beware when engaging in online interactions. In South Carolina, the so-called "419 scheme" became so prevalent that Columbia, S.C., FBI issued a warning. It's similar to the scam listed above but some telltale signs are that landlords are in foreign lands for mission work and e-mail messages usually are overly polite with incorrect spelling. According to the FBI release, renters might be asked to fill out credit applications asking for personal information like credit history, social security numbers, and work history.
3. Know that a trustworthy landlord will have as many questions for you as you do for them. This mutual relationship works both ways—they want a good tenant and you want a good place to call home. If your contact seems to be in a rush and doesn't take the necessary steps including allowing you to view the apartment, red flags should go up. Also ask for copies of everything: checks, money orders, the application, receipts and the lease.

TIPS TO REMEMBER

- If possible, try to arrange to meet the owner/landlord in person. Dealing with someone only online and out of the area increases the odds of being scammed.
- Avoid wiring money. These transactions are final once processed. Also do not share any personal information including your social security number or bank account.
- E-mails written in poor English and with a sense of urgency should raise a red flag.
- If the rental rate doesn't match up with other rates in the area, it may be a sign of a rental scam.

WHO SHOULD YOU NOTIFY ABOUT FRAUD?

Contact the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Online at ftc.gov or call 877-FTC-HELP.

Sources: FBI (http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2009/july/housingscam_072909) and FTC (www.ftc.gov)

About this section: This editorial was written by Heather Kempkie in conjunction with The Washington Post Custom Content department and did not involve the news or editorial departments of this newspaper.

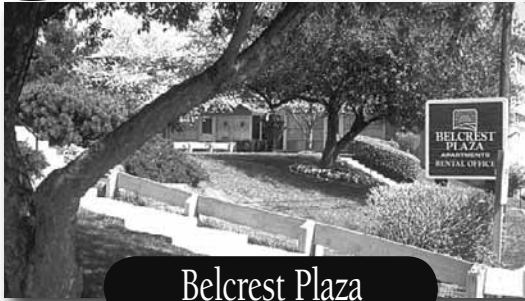
MD • PR. GEORGE'S CO. Apartments Condos • Co-ops	MD • PR. GEORGE'S CO. Apartments Condos • Co-ops	MD • PR. GEORGE'S CO. Apartments Condos • Co-ops	MD • PR. GEORGE'S CO. Apartments Condos • Co-ops	MD • PR. GEORGE'S CO. Apartments Condos • Co-ops	MD • PR. GEORGE'S CO. Apartments Condos • Co-ops	MD • PR. GEORGE'S CO. Apartments Condos • Co-ops	MD • PR. GEORGE'S CO. Apartments Condos • Co-ops
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

GRADY MANAGEMENT IN MD • EXCEPTIONAL COMMUNITIES

Hyattsville, MD

CLOSE TO METRORAIL

1 BR FROM \$789*



Belcrest Plaza
3400 Toledo Terr • gradymgt.com

- 1 br's from \$789*
- 2 br's from \$999
- 3 br's from \$1,349

- Close to The Mall at Prince Georges
- 5 Minutes to Balt./Wash. Parkway
- Balconies and terraces
- Floor-to-ceiling windows
- **METRO BUS STOPS HERE**
- Grand size pool

888-882-6544
*Select Apts. Call for details.

GRADY MANAGEMENT, INC.
Exceptional People. Exceptional Communities.

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

Oxon Hill, MD

1 BR FROM \$910*

FULL SIZE WASHER/DRYER*



Portabello
6441 Livingston Rd • gradymgt.com

- 1 br's from \$910*
- 2 br's from \$1,125
- 2 br's + den from \$1,255
- 3 br's from \$1,440

- **Gas heat & cooking included***
- Metro bus at your door
- Individual alarm systems included
- Wall-to-Wall carpet
- Sparkling full size pool

301-850-2248
*Select Apts. Call for details.

GRADY MANAGEMENT, INC.
Exceptional People. Exceptional Communities.

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

Forestville, MD

1 BR FROM \$875*

2 BR SPECIALS

GAS HEAT & COOKING INCL.



Fox Club
1935 Brooks Dr • gradymgt.com

- 1 br's from \$875*
- 2 br's from \$1,005
- 3 br's from \$1,286

- House sized apartments
- Master bedroom suites w/sitting areas
- Electronic entry system
- Breakfast bars
- Walk-in closets
- Pool and sundeck

301-637-5787
*Select Apts. Call for details.

GRADY MANAGEMENT, INC.
Exceptional People. Exceptional Communities.

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

Oxon Hill, MD

SPACIOUS INTERIORS. SPARKLING EXTERIORS.

METRO BUS STOPS HERE



Fox Hills North
1108 Kennebec St • gradymgt.com

- 1 br's from \$860
- 2 br's from \$995
- 3 br's from \$1,227

- **New energy/cost saving windows**
- Electronic entry system
- Eat-in kitchens w/ breakfast bars
- Unexpectedly large living rooms
- Pool and playground
- Minutes to National Harbor

301-637-5351

GRADY MANAGEMENT, INC.
Exceptional People. Exceptional Communities.

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY