



# OIG Fraud Bulletin

December 7, 2022

## IMPOSTOR LANDLORDS

Be aware that individuals purporting to be landlords are listing properties for rent that they do not own on various rental websites. These impostor landlords may be part of a complex organized criminal enterprise operating outside of the United States. Below are some red flags to help you identify impostor landlords and protect yourself from falling victim to fraud.

- **Listing is Too Good to be True:** The advertised unit is substantially better in price, location, size, or quality than other available units on the market.
- **Inability to Meet Prospective Tenant:** Impostor landlords will make excuses that they are out of town or agree to meet at the property but never show up.
- **Upfront Payment Demand:** Impostor landlord will require an upfront payment in exchange for a promise that they will send the keys to the prospective tenant by mail.
- **Peer-to-Peer (P2P) Payment Method:** Impostor landlords are known to exploit P2P payment methods like Cash App, Venmo, and PayPal. In order to get the keys, prospective tenants are told to pay an application fee, deposit, and first month's rent using P2P. The P2P profiles used by the impostor landlords are stolen identities or victims of other scams. The impostor landlord may claim this stolen P2P profile is their attorney or business associate.
- **Cryptocurrency:** Tenants should be cautious if a landlord requests initial payment via cryptocurrency, such as Bitcoin.
- **Gift Cards:** Landlords requesting tenants to make payments by gift card is likely a scam. In this instance, a tenant may be told to put money on a gift card, take a picture of the gift card, and send it to the impostor landlord.
- **Fraudulent Use of Official-Looking Email Address:** Impostor landlords may send emails from fraudulent email addresses that are designed to appear as originated come from official sources. By using official sounding titles or words like "Section 8" or "HUD" or "Housing Authority," fraudsters deceive people into corresponding with them—and eventually send them money.



The following fraudulent email addresses have been detected of illicitly being used to impersonate HUD and housing authority personnel in the administration of the Housing Choice Voucher Program:

-Section8HUD1@mail.com	Section8Hud1111@mail.com
-Section8HUD-@consultant.com	SectionHUD8@consultant.com
-Section8HUD@consultant.com	Tenantsupport@Section8.com
-Section8.HUD@consultant.com	Shipingdelivery@post.com
-Section8.HUD@usa.com	Shipingdelivery@usa.com
-Section8housingauthorityHUD@usa.com	Hud.gov@fastservice.com
-Hud.gov@legislator.com	Asc.inc@mail.com

**Remember, HUD staff will not contact you directly unless you have contacted them first.** If you are unsure, contact the local housing authority ([PHA Contact Information - HUD | HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#)) or the HUD Field Office for your area ([State Information | HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#)).

#### **How to Protect Yourself**

- Insist on meeting the prospective landlord in person by scheduling an in-person meeting in a public place or meet virtually. Ask for the location of the rental unit and tour the unit before renting it. Remember to bring a trusted family member or friend with you.
- Use an Internet search engine to look up the prospective rental address. It may already be listed by a legitimate landlord on a different website. You can also conduct a reverse image search of prospective rental property photos. This search will determine if the photos are present elsewhere on the Internet. [How to Do a Reverse Image Search From Your Phone | PCMag.](#)
- If you are renting a government-subsidized unit (such as a unit advertised as a "voucher" or "section 8" unit), contact your local public housing authority at the phone number or email address listed on their public website to verify the landlord before sending money, documentation, or rental forms.
- Pay your rent with a check, money order, or other verifiable means to track the money. Avoid using cash, gift cards, or other forms of payment. Keep a copy of the check or money order and ask for a receipt as a record of your payment.

Report fraud schemes involving public housing or other HUD-funded government programs or benefits, by contacting the HUD OIG Hotline at 1-800-347-3735 or visit, <https://www.hudoig.gov/hotline>.

