



## **LANDLORDS, ROOMMATES CAN FALL PREY TO COUNTERFEIT CHECKS**

Texans who plan to get a roommate or rent out their house or apartment in the new year should beware of a new version of an old counterfeit check scam.

The U.S. Postal Inspector recently warned that some property owners are being duped by con artists using counterfeit checks. Managers of large apartment complexes and owners of a single rental property are targeted by the scam. A landlord should not trust a prospective tenant who responds from overseas to an online advertisement, pays a deposit with a cashier's check (possibly even offering to pay several months' rent in advance), and then asks the landlord to wire back part of the money. The checks often turn out to be clever counterfeits.

People who advertise seeking roommates should be careful of this scam as well. Roommates abroad who send large deposit checks and then ask to have some funds returned to them because of a "family emergency" or similar reason are simply trying to profit from the prospective roommate's trust.

To provide further reassurances, the scammer might even telephone the person who places the advertisement. But the result is invariably the same: They want to separate consumers from their money.

Many consumers mistakenly believe it is possible to get back their money, but the con artists behind these ploys are almost always in other countries. Even with the assistance of international law enforcement authorities, these thieves are nearly impossible to catch because they are constantly on the move. Landlords and roommate seekers who are contacted with one of these offers should simply say "no."

Sincerely,

Greg Abbott  
Attorney General of Texas

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