

Crime Prevention News

November 2012



How to Spot Apartment Scams on Craigslist and other Rental Listings

We have all heard the old adage “If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.” You would be wise to keep that phrase in mind when perusing the classifieds in search of a new apartment. The Federal Trade Commission, the nation’s consumer protection agency, is advising people looking for apartments or houses to rent to be wary of possible scams. There is a couple of variations on the theme. Some scammers change the contact information on legitimate real estate listings and post the altered ads on other sites (e.g. Craigslist).

Others seek to entice apartment seekers with ads for inexpensive -- but nonexistent -- places for rent and try to get money from them before they realize it is a scam. As you can imagine, in this tight economy, low priced rentals are in even more demand than usual, so extra precaution is needed. Read the following tips to learn how to spot apartment scams and spare yourself the loss of your money, your pride, and a home. There is another old adage that these fraudsters rely on to perpetrate their scams— “there’s a sucker born every minute.” Don’t be fooled!

See video: As reported on Channel 7 news in NYC, click here: [Apartment Scam](#)

Here are some telltale signs of a rental scam, according to the FTC:

The crooks ask you to wire money. They want you to wire your security deposit, application fee and first and last month's rent -- whatever they can squeeze out of you. Bear in mind that wiring money is like sending cash. There is no way to reverse the process.

They ask for money before you've seen the place or signed the lease. That's because, of course, there is no place to see and no lease to sign. They're trying to get your money before you find out. If you can't see the place, meet the person or sign a lease before paying, run -- don't walk -- away from the deal.

The landlord claims to be out of the country. Actually, the scammers may very well be in another country. The Internet has made it possible for people all over the globe to prey on Americans. They may say they will get you the keys through a lawyer or agent and even create fake keys. Don't buy it. Or rent it, rather. Never send money overseas for a rental unit. If you suspect a rental scam, report it to law enforcement and the Federal Trade Commission : www.ftc.gov/ complaint. Also contact the Web site where the ad was posted.

To report scams on Craigslist, send an email to abuse@craigslist.org. Be sure to mention why the post in question is fraudulent, any information you know about the poster, the unique posting ID and a URL to the post. Do not attempt to contact the scam artist yourself.

If you are looking for an apartment, consider using another method for obtaining a rental, i.e. real estate agent, going through a rental agency, etc. Columbia Students, faculty and staff can also visit the University’s real estate office where they can find legitimate apartment listings- <http://facilities.columbia.edu/housing/> or call (212) 854-9300.



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Big Public Safety Thank you to the Columbia University Shotokan Karate Club

Public Safety would like to thank Professor Sicherman & members of the Shotokan Karate club who helped make our self defense classes at both the Morningside and Medical Center campuses a success. **Your Team ROCKS!** We would also like to thank everyone who participated. If you missed any of the self defense classes and are interested in joining the Shotokan Karate Club, please e-mail them at shotokan@columbia.edu. The Shotokan Karate Club meets three times a week on campus.

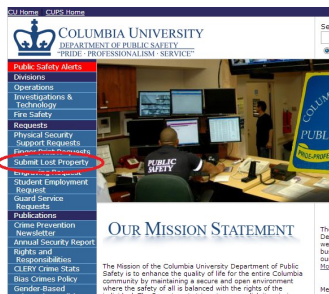


High Security Master Combination Locks Available at CU Public Safety

Public Safety has now added the very popular Master combination locks to their Crime Prevention Arsenal at discounted prices, \$5 each. **Product Features:** Hardened steel shackle for extra cut resistance, Combination security for keyless convenience, 3-Digit dialing and 1,500 combinations for maximum security and 1-7/8" (48mm) wide double-armored stainless steel body. Locks can be purchased @ CU Public Safety Operation Offices:

Morningside Campus: Room 111 Low Library Mon-Fri 9am-5pm or at the Medical Center Campus: Room 109 William Black Building.

Lost & Found Link added to the Public Safety Website



Have you ever lost something on campus? Public Safety has now added a more convenient way to see if your property was found and turned in. You can access the **Lost & Found link** by going to www.columbia.edu/cu/publicsafety. You can also email Public Safety Lost & found ps-lostproperty@columbia.edu. Please make sure you indicate:

Your name, Email Address, Phone Number, Description of Property, Location where Property may have been Lost, Approximate Date & Time Property was Lost.



Cool MTA Smartphone Apps to get around NYC by Bus & Subway

The MTA is challenging software developers to use MTA data to create new apps that improve the transit experience of its 8.5 million daily riders. Apps were developed for I-phone, I-pad, Android, and Windows platforms. Some are FREE. Some require a fee. Check out all 42 winners by going to:

<http://mtaappquest.com/submissions>

