

The Oregon Real Estate Agency recently provided information in their news journal on common scams.

Here are a couple of scams households may fall victim to:

“We Buy Homes” Signs

The North Carolina Department of Justice (NCDOJ) recently [issued a warning](#) to struggling homeowners about responding to “We Buy Homes” signs and postcards.

Instead of buying houses as advertised, most of these companies will try to convince home owners to sign over control of the home, then lease the property to a new tenant. Owners lose their rights to the homes but remain “on the hook” for mortgage payments.

The warning advises homeowners that the companies aren’t likely to pay cash or help secure a fast mortgage payoff, and to beware of requests to transfer title to a property based only on promises to sell it. Also, prospective tenants and buyers should never pay money upfront before signing a lease or purchase contract, always confirm that the seller is actually the owner, and always work with a trusted leasing or real estate agent.

The release also advises struggling homeowners to speak to lenders directly, how to contact the [State Home Foreclosure Prevention Project](#) for help, and how to report a “We Buy Homes” scam to the NCDOJ.

“Section 8” Scam Websites

According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), phony websites are popping up that cheat persons who seek “Section 8” housing.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 8 program funds vouchers that enable very low-income households to rent privately owned homes.

Applicants are supposed to contact their local housing authority to sign up for voucher waiting list lotteries, for which there is no fee. But an FTC [Consumer Information Blog](#) reports that scammers are creating official-looking websites that collect lottery registration fees, which the applicant will never see again, as well as personal information that may lead to identity theft. And, victimized applicants are not actually registered on the legitimate waiting lists.

In another twist, some of the sites falsely list Section 8 properties for rent upon payment of the first month’s rent via wire transfer or a prepaid card. While the properties might actually exist, the ads are fakes and the money is stolen.

The FTC warns Section 8 applicants to directly contact local housing authorities through HUD’s website to register for legitimate voucher lotteries. ■

If you’d like to read the entire journal, you may do so at <http://www.oregon.gov/rea/docs/OREN-J/OREN-J April 2016/OREN-J April 2016.pdf>