

Deceptive Use of Craigslist

From time to time, members have reported that one of their Residential for sale listings have been fraudulently offered on Craigslist as a rental by an unknown person. Unfortunately, this is an ongoing issue occurring in communities all over the world. Here are some tips to combat internet real estate scams.

What is Craigslist? A website featuring local classifieds and forums for more than 550 cities in over 50 countries and is largely free. The site generates more than 12 billion page views per month (7th worldwide in terms of English version page version as of this writing). To view the Rochester edition go to <http://rochester.craigslist.org/>.

To combat misleading ads, there is a flagging system which allows Craigslist users to mark inappropriate postings. By using the flagging feature located at the upper corner of each post, you can take action if you feel a posting is inappropriate, by clicking on "**Prohibited**" (violates [Craigslist Terms of Use](#) or other posted guidelines).



If a post receives enough negative flags it will automatically be removed (note - this system is fully automatic). The number of flags needed to remove a post varies by category and city and they don't tell people what those thresholds are. It is against rules to post anything that is "false, deceptive, misleading, deceitful, mis-informative, or constitutes "bait and switch"." For this type of situation, it may make more sense to report the violation with an e-mail to Craigslist. Be sure to include the URL (or eight-digit post ID number) in your message. Visit the Craigslist Safety page for tips recognizing suspected scams: <http://www.craigslist.org/about/scams>.

Tips from Craigslist on how to sidestep would-be scammers:

Deal locally, face-to-face —follow this one rule and avoid 99% of scam attempts.

- **Do not extend payment to anyone you have not met in person.**
- **Beware offers involving shipping** - deal with locals you can meet in person.
- **Never wire funds (e.g. Western Union)** - anyone who asks you to is a scammer.
- **Don't accept cashier/certified checks or money orders** - banks cash fakes, then hold you responsible.
- **Transactions are between users only**, no third party provides a "guarantee".
- **Never give out financial info** (bank account, social security, paypal account, etc).
- **Do not rent or purchase sight-unseen**—that amazing "deal" may not exist.
- **Refuse background/credit checks** until you have met landlord/employer in person.

Who should I notify about fraud or scam attempts?

- Report to Craigslist <https://rochester.craigslist.org/contact>
- Internet Fraud Complaint Center <https://www.ic3.gov/default.aspx>
- Federal Trade Commission www.ftc.gov/complaint or call 1-877-FTC-HELP.
- Consumer Sentinel/Military (for armed service members and families) <https://www.military.consumer.gov/report-scam>

Learn more about Craigslist scams <https://www.craigslist.org/about/scams>

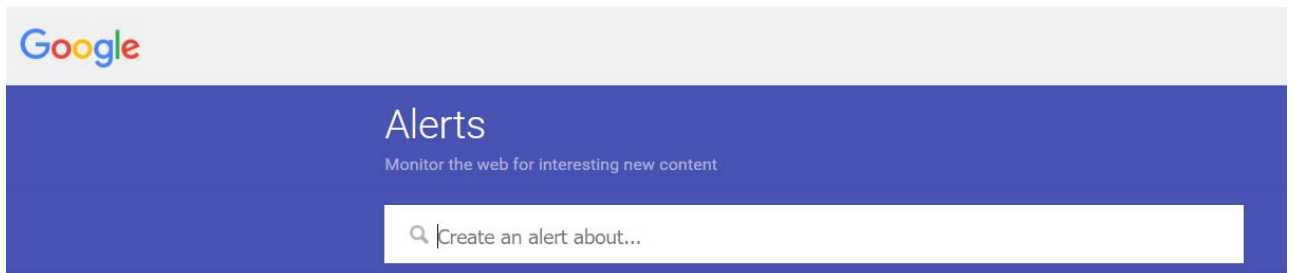
Google Alerts

Set up an automated search of Google that will send you an e-mail every time one of your keywords is found by the

search engines on any Website or Web entry that is indexed by Google. This is one of the most effective ways to monitor for abuse or misuse of your listings. You can set up alerts based on your listings' addresses, your name, your company's name, community, town, etc. Google will also allow you to limit the searches by type, giving you the choice of news, blogs, realtime, video, discussions, or all of the above ("everything.")

To set up a Google Alert, go to www.google.com/alerts

1. Type in your search terms as you would in a normal Google search
2. Enter your e-mail address where you would like to receive the alerts
3. Click "Create Alert"



You can create up to 1,000 alerts this way for a single e-mail address. To make sure you don't get a lot of items you are not interested in, use advanced search techniques:

- If you use the plus sign, (+) this will find only the word in the form you indicate. (i.e. if you search for +REALTOR®, the results will not include the plural, REALTORS®.) The + sign must be placed before the search term without any spaces.
- If you search for REALTOR® +yourtown – the result will include both terms when they appear within ten words of each other.
- Using quotes limits your search to the exact item within the marks, whether it is a word, name or phrase. This is useful if you have a common name. "John Smith" +"real estate" or "Jane Doe" +"ABC Realty"

You may use the following notice to post on a property that you feel may be susceptible to deceptive or fraudulent listing on Craigslist or other internet classified posting services, especially in unoccupied homes. (i.e. high-end rentals or homes on the market in areas with a large number of upscale residential rentals.)

It is suggested that you print the notice on brightly colored 8 ½" x 11" paper and post INSIDE the home in a highly visible area, such as the front door or in front window that would be visible from outside.

CRAIGSLIST ALERT



- **This house is NOT FOR RENT!**
- **This house is 'For Sale' ONLY!**
- **If you saw an ad on Craigslist regarding this property being 'For Rent'...it is a SCAM.**
- **Please refer to the REALTOR® contact info on the 'For Sale' sign in the front yard for more details.**