



# SELLER IMPERSONATION FRAUD

## PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS AND YOUR CLIENTS WITH THESE TIPS

**Check the tax or appraisal records online to find the name and address of record for the property.** If the property and

- ▶ mailing address are different from where the seller appears to be calling from, it raises a question of whether the seller may be someone impersonating the property owner and whether the agent should take steps to verify their identity.

**Send a confirmation letter to the property owner** at both the property address and the mailing address for the tax bill. The

- ▶ letter should clarify the agent is listing the property and sending the letter as a fraud prevention measure. It should provide the agent's contact details and request the property owner to reach out to confirm their intent to sell the property.

**Access the secretary of state corporate records online for properties owned by an LLC or Corporation.** These records

- ▶ include the name and address of the manager, registered agent, an/or officers. The agent can then reach out to them for help in contacting and verifying the true property owner.

**Ask the seller to provide a government issued photo ID.** Once received, follow these steps:

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  - Verify that the address on the ID matches the tax records and if it's presently valid.
  - Compare the signature on the ID with recorded documents from the county clerk's real property records. Your title company can assist with providing the documents for comparison.

**Set up a video call with the seller.** If the seller refuses a video call without a valid reason, it's a red flag indicating potential fraud. If you can have a video call, ask the seller property specific questions that only the owner would know. Trust your instincts if anything seems suspicious during the conversation.

- ▶ **Request copies of documents that only the property owner would have** such as a copy of a tax bill, utility bill, copy of the settlement statement, title policy or survey from when the property was purchased.

**Perform a reverse directory search on the provided phone number using**

- ▶ **investigatory databases like Forewarn or IDI Core.** This search will reveal the owner of the phone number or indicate if it's unknown, suggesting the use of a "burner" phone to conceal their true identity.

**Encourage recipients of your mailings to create a Google alert for the property address.** This will notify them if the property is

- ▶ marketed or mentioned publicly. Agents should also set up Google alerts for their own listings to prevent scams and fraudulent activities.

**if you believe you are a victim of seller impersonation fraud...**



- Cease all communication with the fraudulent seller.
- Terminate the listing immediately.
- Notify all involved parties of the fraud.