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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rochester Police Department warns of uptick in rental scams

May 6, 2020 – Rochester, Minnesota – With heightened awareness and precautions being taken to preserve our health, the Rochester Police Department is advising people to also be wary about financial health as would-be scammers are capitalizing on COVID-19 as a means to swindle and steal both money and information.

“We have noticed an increase in the number of people reporting that they have been victims of Craigslist rental scams,” said Casey Moilanen, Captain of the Department’s Investigations team. “The suspects use COVID-19 as an excuse to forego showing a potential renter the property in question and then ask them to wire the first month’s rent and security deposit.” According to Moilanen, victims later learn that these transactions only served to benefit scammers with no legal rights or access to the property in question.

While the Police Department is not able to prevent you from coming into contact with a potential scammer, here are some red flags to be aware of:

- The property owner or landlord will not meet you in person.
- They want you to move in right away.
- They want you to wire or mail money to them.
- The price appears to be too good to be true.
- The listing has typos, poor grammar, or excessive punctuation.
- There is no application and/or screening process.

If any of these scenarios present themselves, do not send money or information; you are likely dealing with a scammer. Above all, Moilanen says, “Go with your gut. If something doesn’t feel right, that’s probably a good sign that the person you’re dealing with is up to no good.”

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