

What is Deed Fraud?

Deed fraud comes in many forms, but essentially it occurs when a property deed or title transfer is executed and recorded illegally without the authorization or knowledge of the true owner. Deed fraud or property title theft, isn't a new idea - this problem has been around for decades. This is most commonly used with deceased property owners, vacation/second homes, or properties that are vacant and not being monitored or maintained, and is becoming increasingly popular in blighted areas with a large number of vacant properties.

The alleged "buyer" takes title to the property by forging the owner's signature on the deed, either using false identification or a counterfeit notary signature and stamp. The new "owner" can then rent the property, move into the property themselves, or sell the property by transferring title to a legitimate buyer. If the false transfer and sale happen quickly, the property can be sold to a new buyer without the current property owner or heirs knowing about it.



3 Warning Signs of Deed Fraud

- 1. UNPAID BILLS.** A notice for an unpaid water, tax, or mortgage bill or, interestingly enough, not receiving a water bill or tax bill that you should have received. In that case, an identity thief may go to the taxing authority and change the address to which the bills will be sent to hide the crime longer.
- 2. NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE.** Receipt of a notice of foreclosure when you don't even have a mortgage.
- 3. EVIDENCE OF LIFE.** Evidence of activity or someone living in an unoccupied or vacation home.

3 Ways to Help Protect Against Deed Fraud

1. MONITOR YOUR CREDIT REPORTS

Monitoring your credit report can help you discover financial actions taken by others in your name. Federal law provides you with the right to have a free copy of your credit report from the three major credit reporting agencies, Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. You can get a free credit report through AnnualCreditReport.com. You can also get credit monitoring through various identity theft protection services.

2. CHECK THE STATUS OF YOUR DEED

Many local registries of deeds allow access online. If your local registry allows it, you should regularly check on the status of your deed to confirm that no one has done anything affecting your property ownership. Some registries of deeds even have services that will notify you when any actions are done that affect your property. If your local registry of deeds provides this service, you should consider signing up for it.

3. CONSIDER BUYING AN OWNER'S TITLE INSURANCE POLICY

When purchasing property always request an owner's title insurance policy, which can offer significant protection from the harm caused by deed fraud. Title insurance makes sure the person you are purchasing the home from is the rightful owner.



CHICAGO TITLE®

www.ChicagoTitle.com

Call me today to learn more about Deed Fraud or to request a quote for owner's title insurance to protect your property today and far into the future.