

how to report suspected real estate fraud

1. Prepare a chronology of the events that took place.
2. Note who was involved, including the names and addresses of the people and companies.
3. Describe what you were told, and by whom. What were you told that you later learned was false?
4. Include copies of all documents you signed, or that were given to you, including grant deeds, quitclaim deeds, trust deeds, reconveyances, assignments of deeds, notes, contracts, agreements, escrow instructions and statements.
5. Also include copies of canceled checks, or money orders (both front and back), that you gave in payment or that were given to you as payment.
6. Call (619) 531-3552 or request a complaint form via email: reform@sdcca.org.

district attorney office locations

San Diego – Hall of Justice
330 W. Broadway, San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 531-4070

North County Branch – Vista Courthouse
325 S. Melrose Dr., Ste. 5000, Vista, CA 92083
(760) 806-4079

East County Branch – El Cajon Courthouse
250 Main St., 5th Floor, El Cajon, CA 92020
(619) 441-4538

South Bay Branch
333 H St., Ste. 4000, Chula Vista, CA 91910
(619) 498-5650

Juvenile Division – Juvenile Courthouse
2851 Meadowlark Dr., San Diego, CA 92123
(858) 694-4254

Real Estate Fraud Program
330 W. Broadway, Ste. 750
San Diego, CA 92101

To report fraud, call:
(619) 531-3552



www.sandiegoda.com

REAL ESTATE FRAUD PROGRAM



if you're the victim of a real estate scheme, we can help



Bonnie M. Dumanis
District Attorney

A Message from your District Attorney:

The dream of home ownership remains one of the most important goals for many San Diegans. Owning one's home or business is a source of pride and security, and provides an opportunity for financial growth. Unfortunately, real estate fraud scams can steal these dreams with a single forged signature or get-rich-quick scheme.

The San Diego District Attorney's Office is dedicated to the investigation and prosecution of real estate-related crimes. Attacking real estate crimes and other white-collar criminal activity is one of our top priorities, which is why the Real Estate Fraud Program exists within the Economic Crimes Division. We will not let individuals empty the pockets of unsuspecting San Diegans.

If you suspect you are a victim of real estate fraud, or have knowledge of such activity, please report this information to the District Attorney's Office as directed in this brochure. Through our collective efforts, we can protect individuals from fraudulent activity and provide a safe real estate market.

With your help, the District Attorney Real Estate Fraud Program will make San Diego County a safe and honest real estate market for us all.



Jamie M. Romanis

Real Property Crimes

Real property crime can take many forms, but most often involves grand theft, forgery, and a relatively recent scheme, identity theft. Below are samples of the types of cases we investigate and prosecute:

- Fraudulent real estate investment schemes, typically involving the sale of trust deeds. Trust deeds may be unsecured, or inadequately secured. Payoff funds may be diverted by the agent servicing the debt. The servicing agent may continue making monthly payments to the investor so that the theft is not discovered.
- Use of forged escrow instructions to steal escrow deposits.
- Fraud in private sales of property, such as failure to disclose all liens against the property.
- Fraud in installments land sales contracts. The seller may accept payments from the buyer, but fail to pay the underlying mortgage, causing the property to be foreclosed.
- Forgery of grant deeds. By assuming the identity of the true owner, or claiming to represent the true owner, the thief fraudulently obtains title to a property. He then borrows against the property, or sells the property, stealing the equity. The typical target of such a scheme is a property with a large amount of equity, most likely an elderly owner. A common scenario is that the thief claims to be the trustee of a family trust by presenting forged trust documents and claiming that he has the authority to sell or encumber the trust property.
- Forgery or alteration of a trust deed or grant deed before recording. For example, the loan amount on a trust deed may be altered to look like the borrower owes much more.
- A scheme known as "flipping" where the value of a property is inflated using a phony appraisal, and the property sold to an unsuspecting buyer, who then owes far more on the home than it is worth.

Foreclosure Fraud

This fraud affects the distressed homeowner who is unable to make his mortgage payment, has no equity in his home because of falling property values, and only wants to salvage his credit and walk away from the property.

The seller is approached by a purchaser who offers to take title to the property in exchange for curing the defaults and saving the seller's credit. The purchaser may sweeten the deal by agreeing to carry back paper he has no intention of paying. By knowingly making such false promises, he commits foreclosure fraud and perhaps theft upon the seller.

The same criminal may commit grand theft by marketing the property to unsophisticated victims who lack any knowledge of escrow or title insurance. The victim makes a cash down payment; receives an unrecorded grant deed; moves in; makes monthly payments to the suspect, and is evicted several months later by the legitimate purchaser at the foreclosure that was looming when the scam started.

You may also find help at these agencies & organizations:

Department Of Real Estate (DRE)
(619) 525-4192 (General Inquiries) • www.dre.ca.gov

Office Of Real Estate Appraisers (OREA)
(916) 552-9000 • www.orea.ca.gov

Lawyers Referral & Information Service (LRIS)
(619) 231-8585 • www.sdcba.org/lris/

Department Of Corporations (DOC)
(866) 275-2677 • www.corp.ca.gov

San Diego Association
Of Realtors – Mediation Center
(858) 715-8020 • www.sdar.com

San Diego Housing Commission
(619) 231-9400 • www.sdhc.net

Contractor's State License Board
(800) 321-2752 • www.cslb.ca.gov