

Civic Center Plaza Entrance
630 N. Broadway
P.O. Box 149
Santa Ana, CA 92702-0149



ESTABLISHED 1889

OFFICE OF THE ASSESSOR

WEBSTER J. GUILLORY
COUNTY ASSESSOR

Telephone: (714) 834-2727
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February 15, 2006

Honorable Nancy Wieben Stock
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Orange County Grand Jury
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Re: Response to 2005-06 Grand Jury Report, "Real Property, Is Your Home Safe from Property Fraud?"

Dear Judge Stock:

The Orange County Assessor Department has received a copy of the 2005-06 Grand Jury Report, "Real Property, Is your Home Safe from Property Fraud?" In compliance with Penal Code 933.05(f), the Assessor Department provides the following response to Finding 6.5, Recommendation 7.5, Recommendation 7.6, and Recommendation 7.7 in this report.

Finding 6.5

Assurance Sampling: The Office of the Assessor does conduct quality assurance sampling of data recorded through the Recorder/Assessor Interface (RAI) system to determine if any documents were miscoded or had data omitted pertaining to a property transfer.

Response from Assessor: Concur. The Assessor Department will continue its practice of sampling and review of data and documents received through the Recorder/Assessor Interface (RAI).

Recommendation 7.5

Fraud Hotline: In addition to the Orange County Consumer Fraud Hotline that is in place, the Clerk-Recorder and Assessor's offices should implement a Real Estate Fraud Hotline and Information Program like the ones the Los Angeles County Department of Consumer Affairs and the Los Angeles Police Department have in place. Both Hotlines identify several types of real property fraud and common warning signs of such fraud. See Exhibit C for an example of the web page the Los Angeles County Department of Consumer Affairs maintains identifying warning signs of real property fraud. (FINDING 6.4)

Response from Assessor: The Assessor Department can develop and provide a public notice at the Assessor's website – Real Estate Fraud Alert. A copy of such a notice including the county Fraud Hotline information is attached. This notice may also be included in some of the Assessor Department's mailing to property owners.

Honorable Nancy Wieben Stock, Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
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Recommendation 7.6

Public Notification: Both the Clerk-Recorder and Assessor's offices should work with the California Assessor's Association and the California State Board of Equalization to produce and distribute posters and brochures to various senior centers and agencies that may aid in informing Orange County property owners of the warning signs of real estate fraud, including mailing brochures along with any other information sent real property owners, e.g., mailing a brochure along with a property tax bill. (FINDING 6.4)

Response from Assessor: As indicated in our response to Recommendation 7.5, the Assessor Department will post a notice on our website and may include the notice in some of our public mailings. The Assessor Department will also inform the Taxpayers' Rights Advocate Office of the State Board of Equalization, the California Assessors' Association and the Tax Collector about such public notice actions.

Recommendation 7.7

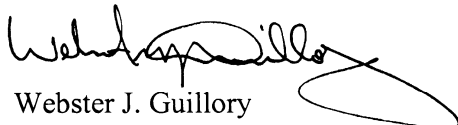
Quality Assurance: The Office of the Assessor should continue to conduct its quality assurance sampling to ensure that all documents are properly coded. (FINDING 6.5)

Response from Assessor: Concur. The Assessor Department will continue its practice of sampling and review of data and documents received through the Recorder/Assessor Interface (RAI).

The Assessor Department appreciates the opportunity to review this important subject with the Grand Jury.

Please call me at (714) 834-2734 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,


Webster J. Guillory
County Assessor

WJG:mt

ct: Bette Flick, Chairperson, 2005-06 Orange County Grand Jury
Thomas Mauk, CEO
Tom Daly, County Clerk-Recorder
John M. W. Moorlach, Treasurer-Tax Collector

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OFFICE OF THE ASSESSOR

REAL ESTATE FRAUD ALERT

Real estate fraud is a form of theft criminals may use to steal your home, real property or your equity in a property. Real estate fraud is on the rise throughout the county and can take many forms. Your best protection against is to be aware of the warning signs, and report any suspicious activity or transactions against your property.

COMMON REAL PROPERTY FRAUDS:

Home Equity/Identity Fraud - A forged deed is recorded to give the appearance that the perpetrator has acquired ownership of a property. The perpetrator uses the equity in the property as collateral to borrow money. No payments are made on the new loan(s), and the true owner could face foreclosure.

Home Renovation/Mortgage Fraud - Contractors offer to do home improvement work or lenders offer special "low-interest" financing, but do not deliver what was promised. Homeowners are left with partially complete or substandard construction, or a mortgage payment that is higher than expected.

COMMON WARNING SIGNS:

Missing Property Value Notice Or Tax Bill - A missing property value notice or property tax bill can be the first signs of a Home Equity Fraud. The Assessor mails property value notices in **July**, and the Tax Collector mails the bills in **September**. Call the Assessor at (714) 834-2727 if you not receive a notice, or the Tax Collector at (714) 834-3411 if you do not receive a tax bill.

You Are Notified That A Property Document Has Been Recorded - The County Clerk-Recorder sends notification to property owners when a document is filed against their property. If you did not initiate the document filing, contact your local police department or the Orange County Sheriff's Department at (714) 647-7040.

Loan Papers Or Payment Booklets - If you receive documents for a loan you did not applied for, notify the lender immediately.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Orange County District Attorney, Economic Crimes Unit - (714) 834-3600
- State of California, Department of Real Estate - (213) 620-2072
- Orange County Consumer Fraud Hotline - (714) 347-8706