

Beware of Rental Scams Offering Too-Good-to-be-True Prices

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HONOLULU – Online classified advertisements are luring Maui wildfire survivors with false offers of available rental units, and people are learning too late that the cash they paid for a security deposit went to a scammer instead.

Disaster survivors should be aware that scammers try to obtain money or steal personal information through fraud or identity theft after a disaster. They solicit assistance for disaster survivors by phone, email, letter or face-to-face.

Be suspicious of prices that are too good to be true and never pay with cash or digital currency. To avoid falling victim to a scam, talk to specialists at the FEMA Helpline (**800-621-3362**) and American Red Cross representatives at the Lahaina Disaster Recovery Center.

In the latest scam, wildfire survivors find apartments in online ads that include pictures of the units. When contacted, the advertisers ask for a meet-up at a local Maui business and suggest the person interested in the apartment bring cash. In return, the apartment seeker is given an official-looking lease that proves to be worthless. The person who received the security deposit is not the landlord and doesn't own the unit.

If you believe you or a loved one has been the victim of a scam, report it immediately to the **Maui Police Department** at **808-244-6400**. Consumers may also file a fraud complaint with the Hawai'i Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs' hotline at **808-587-4272**, Option 7.

If you suspect fraud of any kind related to disaster assistance or you have knowledge of fraud, waste or abuse, report it to the FEMA Fraud Investigations and Inspections Division at FEMA-OCSO-Tipline@fema.dhs.gov or call **866-223-0814**.

For the latest information on the Maui wildfire recovery efforts, visit mauicounty.gov, mauirecovers.org, fema.gov/disaster/4724 and [Hawaii Wildfires](http://HawaiiWildfires.gov) -



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