

By Mike Lamb  
Staff Writer

September 13, 2015 9:13AM

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## Scams target housing applicants

SAN BERNARDINO — Fraudulent websites and telemarketers are targeting Housing Authority of San Bernardino County applicants, according to one of the agency's officials.

Ana Gamiz says HUD offices are receiving complaints from Barstow and other locations in the county. Gamiz, the director of policy and community affairs with HUD, reminds applicants that there are no fees involved in applying for housing.

"Some folks say the calls seem suspicious and they call us," Gamiz said. "Scammers are becoming more and more crafty on how they approach consumers out there. Just call us (at 909-890-0644)."

The HUD website (hacsb.com) has a fraud alert as well.

"Several fraudulent websites are charging prospective Housing Choice Voucher (commonly referred to as Section 8) applicants fees to submit an application, along with collecting personal information such as Social Security numbers, credit card information, etc., falsely stating that this information is needed for a credit check to submit an application," HUD's alert reads. "Others falsely advertise that the Housing Choice Voucher waiting list is opened. This is a scam and could lead to possible identify theft.

"Housing Authorities do not charge fees to apply to any of their affordable housing programs. The Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino's Housing Choice Voucher waiting list is currently closed. Prospective applicants also do not need to pull credit reports to apply for affordable housing programs. We urge our current and future program residents/participants and partners to be aware of these types of scams."

Gamiz also said landlords are being targeted as well. "I remind them there is no fee to become a landlord," she said.

An alert for landlords is also posted on the HUD website.

"It has come to our attention that a person/persons posing as Housing Authority employees are trying to collect monies for free information/services such as booklets, workshops, property listings, etc," the alert reads. "Please do not provide any account details or money to these callers. The Housing Authority does not charge landlords for any services or information related to participating in our programs."

*Mike Lamb can be reached at 760-957-0613 or [mlamb@desertdispatch.com](mailto:mlamb@desertdispatch.com). You can also follow him on Twitter @mlambdispatch.*

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