

SCAMS REPORT

MILTON TOWNSHIP S.A.L.T. COUNCIL MEETING NOVEMBER 8, 2021

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Common Travel Scams

- **“Free” vacations**: You receive a call, email, text message, or a flyer in the mail informing you that you just won a free vacation. If you respond to the offer, you’re told you have to pay some taxes and fees in order to collect your prize. This is a scam. No legitimate company would ask you to pay money when you’re the winner of a free prize. If you didn’t enter a contest for which you could have won a free vacation, you’ve confirmed the offer is a scam.
- **International travel documents**: Companies claiming to assist individuals obtain visas, passports, or other international travel documents exist on the internet. These companies charge exorbitant fees for their services and are often run by scammers. If you need help obtaining travel documents, it is available online at no cost from the U.S. Department of State (DOS) at *travel.state.gov*. (NOTE: The DOS charges a small fee if you decide to submit an application for the documents.)
- **Robocalls offering vacation “specials”**: If you receive a robocall offering you a vacation at a discounted price, it is a scam. Calls from telemarketers trying to sell you something are illegal unless you have previously authorized the caller in writing to contact you. Thus, if someone calls you to discuss vacation deals without having first obtained your permission to do so, they are breaking the law, and you should think twice about doing business with that individual or firm.
- **International driving permits (IDP’s)**: Scammers have created fraudulent websites to sell fake IDPs. If you happen to buy a fake permit, it’s a worthless document that could cause you serious legal problems or travel delays if you’re caught using it in a foreign country. These are the three U.S. agencies authorized to issue IDPs:
 - U.S. Department of State (*travel.state.gov*),
 - American Automobile Association (AAA) (*aaa.com*), and
 - American Automobile Touring Alliance (AATA) (*aataidp.com*).

If you purchase an IDP somewhere else, the document is a fake, and you will lose the money you paid. When a legitimate permit is issued, the information on the driver’s domestic license is translated into nine different languages to assist in communicating with foreign authorities during the driver’s travels. The presence of these translations may confirm that a permit is legitimate.

- **Vacation home rentals**: There are many legitimate property owners who advertise their properties online as vacation rentals. Scammers don’t hesitate to take advantage of these opportunities to steal money. They hijack legitimate listings and advertise them as their own. If you decide to rent one of these properties, you’ll likely find that other people have already booked it when you arrive for your vacation. You’ll have to find another place to stay. The money you sent is gone.

Rather than hijacking legitimate listings, some scammers post online listings of properties that don’t exist or aren’t for rent. If you rent one of these properties, you’ll have to find another place to stay during your vacation. Your money cannot be recovered.

If you’re told the application fee, security deposit, or first month’s rent for a property must be paid by gift card, debit card, or wire transfer, you’re dealing with a scammer. To protect yourself from being a victim, you should plan to meet with the property’s owner or agent and inspect the property before making payment or signing a rental agreement.

[Resource: FTC]