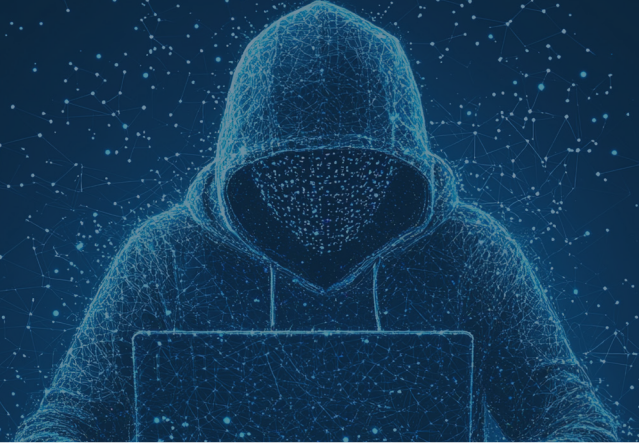


WIRE FRAUD

Do's and Don'ts



The real estate industry is continuing to experience a drastic increase in escrow fraud theft. It is critical that every buyer, seller, real estate agent, lender, and attorney take all precautions to safeguard real estate closing funds.

REAL WIRE FRAUD CASE EXAMPLES

Fraudsters create email addresses **using domains that look almost identical** to a legitimate attorney's – sometimes even using the attorney's actual company logo. They communicate with the buyer or seller as if they are the attorney and provide fraudulent wiring instructions.

After gaining access to a seller's email account, fraudsters monitor communication with their real estate agent or attorney. They then **impersonate the seller** and send altered wiring instructions to the attorney, causing funds to be wired directly to the fraudster's account.

Criminals are getting smarter and more sophisticated, posing as parties to the transaction and using email to divert buyer funds, seller funds, and loan funds.

Using names of real employees, fraudsters will email a buyer pretending to be their attorney or agent. They provide **altered wiring instructions** for the buyer's closing funds, directing them to a fraudulent account controlled by the fraudster.

Impersonating the seller, fraudsters will contact the closing attorney, instructing them to wire the seller's proceeds to a fraudulent bank account instead of the seller's legitimate one.

Kim Hall

Underwriter / Marketing Manager

C: (910) 489-3751

O: (919) 783-5544 ext. 1030

khall@keytitlellc.net

The Key Choice in the Carolinas

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WIRE FRAUD DO'S

- Call your attorney, **using a known and trusted phone number** to verbally confirm all wiring instructions before sending/receiving funds.
- Call your attorney immediately if you receive any notices (email, phone, mail, etc.) **stating wiring instructions have changed**.
- **Carefully examine email addresses** from your real estate agent and attorney to ensure they are correct. If an email seems suspicious, notify your real estate agent or attorney immediately.
- Carefully **review your personal information** on your transaction paperwork to ensure it is correct.
- **Confirm any changes** to the transaction with your real estate agent or attorney in person or by phone using a known and trusted phone number.
- If you suspect that your **email has been compromised** or you **do not receive funds** in a timely fashion, contact your attorney or real estate agent immediately.
- **Use encrypted email** to communicate sensitive information.

WIRE FRAUD DON'TS

- **Don't** provide information about yourself or your transaction to any unknown or unnecessary parties.
- **Don't** assume email is safe.
- **Don't** assume that an email or attachment is safe just because it has the same letterhead as your real estate agent, attorney, or title company.
- **Don't** wire your funds or give your wiring instructions to an attorney without calling them to verbally confirm your correct account information.



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