



# Official: Tax con artists visiting homes

## 3 people report fake agents warning of tax delinquency

By MARK HICKS • The Leaf-Chronicle • June 7, 2009

At least three Montgomery County residents have been contacted by people claiming they have not paid their property taxes or they owe back taxes, said County Trustee Brenda Radford.

That kind of fear-tactic scam is nothing new by mail or telephone.

What's unusual in these cases is that at least two men dressed in white shirts and ties came to the property.

The boldness of the con artists had Radford upset.

"People need to be extra, extra careful, and they need to protect themselves because no one should ever contact them by phone or in person about their taxes," Radford said. "Their mortgage company would send them a letter, either by certified or registered mail. They should not respond to people just out driving around."

A pair of men came to property Kenneth Powers owns in the Cunningham area on Friday, but he and his wife, Nancy, were both at work. Instead, a family friend talked with them.

"She said they were very official-looking. They were wearing white shirts and ties, and they were driving a white pickup that had no identifying markings on it," he said. "But they looked official enough to be believed."

Powers said the men had a map of the property and what appeared to be documents, and they told the friend that foreclosure proceeding had been started.

The friend also was told the owners would have to vacate the property by June 16 and the land would be sold on June 22.

The friend was worried and went inside the house to call Powers, who began checking to be sure a mistake had not occurred with his taxes. The Trustee's Office showed no taxes were owed.

Powers said the two didn't show any ID and they never mentioned a company or agency they worked for.

### Entering the home

Radford said two other similar calls were received from people worried that their taxes had not been paid.

One caller told the clerk the men were accompanied by uniformed officers who came inside their home and started opening drawers and looking around.

Neither Radford or Powers could figure out the exact motive of the visitors.

"I don't know what their goal was," Powers said. "I don't know if they were casing the place for a burglary or what. I have no idea."

Regardless, Radford said the visitors "do not need to be profiting from hard-working people."

She said she contacted the Sheriff's Office about the matter.

Capt. Mike Bowers said that based on what he heard from Radford, no crime has been committed.

"Until we can verify a crime occurred or we have a victim, it's more or less hearsay," he said.

Bowers said he assigned a detective to the Powers case.

#### TIPS TO AVOID SCAMS

- Never respond to someone contacting you asking for personal information or account numbers.
- Never respond to a stranger or a mailing asking you to cash a check, make a deposit or otherwise access your accounts.

Radford said the clerk didn't get information from the first caller, and the second caller did not live on the property, so their records had only the owner's address.

Radford and Nancy Powers expressed concern that older people might be tricked by such visitors who appear to be legitimate.

"I would hate for that to happen to an older person, or anybody," Nancy Powers said. "It put the fear in us."

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