

Timeshare Marketing Scams

01/25/12—Timeshare owners across the country are being scammed out of millions of dollars by unscrupulous companies that promise to sell or rent the unsuspecting victims' timeshares. In the typical scam, timeshare owners receive unexpected or uninvited telephone calls or e-mails from criminals posing as sales representatives for a timeshare resale company. The representative promises a quick sale, often within 60-90 days. The sales representatives often use high-pressure sales tactics to add a sense of urgency to the deal. Some victims have reported that sales representatives pressured them by claiming there was a buyer waiting in the wings, either on the other line or even present in the office.

Timeshare owners who agree to sell are told that they must pay an upfront fee to cover anything from listing and advertising fees to closing costs. Many victims have provided credit cards to pay the fees ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars. Once the fee is paid, timeshare owners report that the company becomes evasive—calls go unanswered, numbers are disconnected, and websites are inaccessible.

In some cases, timeshare owners who have been defrauded by a timeshare sales scheme have been subsequently contacted by an unscrupulous timeshare fraud recovery company as well. The representative from the recovery company promises assistance in recovering money lost in the sales scam. Some recovery companies require an up-front fee for services rendered, while others promise no fees will be paid unless a refund is obtained for the timeshare owner. The IC3 has identified some instances where people involved with the recovery company also have a connection to the resale company, raising the possibility that timeshare owners are being scammed twice by the same people.

If you are contacted by someone offering to sell or rent your timeshare, the IC3 recommends using caution. Listed below are tips you can use to avoid becoming a victim of a timeshare scheme:

- Be wary if a company asks you for up-front fees to sell or rent your timeshare.
- Read the fine print of any sales contract or rental agreement provided.
- Check with the Better Business Bureau to ensure the company is reputable.

To obtain more information on Internet schemes, visit www.LooksTooGoodToBeTrue.com