OREGON DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
Consumer Outreach & Education | Consumer Advocacy

2026 EDITION

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SCAMS, FRAUD & UNLAWFUL BUSINESS PRACTICES



This toolkit offers hyperlinked resources and information to help you spot warning signs, ask the right questions, and take simple steps to protect yourself.

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR OREGON CONSUMERS AND WORKING FAMILIES



WHAT'S INSIDE

Part 1: What to Know
The basics

Part 2: What to Watch For
Warning signs and unethical business practices

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Steps you can take

Part 4: Where to Get Help
Report problems and get support

WORKSHEET
Consumer Worksheet

oregonconsumer.gov

WHY THIS MATTERS

In 2025, the Oregon Consumer Advocacy Program received numerous complaints related to property management including rentals, listings, manufactured home parks, storage units, and false management promises.

COMMON CONCERNS INCLUDE:

- ☑ False rental listings or unavailable units.
- ☑ Fees, repairs, deposits, or rent charged incorrectly.
- ☑ Lease terms change without notice.
- ☑ Storage units misrepresented or auctioned without warning.
- ☑ Property management withholds essential financial records.

1 WHAT TO KNOW
Scams & unethical business practices

Housing and property agreements can affect your finances, belongings, and stability. Before paying for, signing or handling personal information, take time to understand your rights and responsibilities, verify the property, the business and the terms.

Check the property and company
- ☑ Always authenticate the property manager through the Oregon Real Estate Agency license lookup.
- ☑ Cross-check property information, listing availability and company.
- ☑ If applicable, check storage size, climate, and reviews.

Understand the costs and fees
- ☑ Confirm all fees (mandatory, optional or additional).
- ☑ Ask for an itemized list of all charges.
- ☑ Look for hidden fees, security deposit deductions, or recurring charges.

Read the agreements
- ☑ Check lease terms, contracts, renewal terms, services, rules and any signed waivers.
- ☑ Know the repairs, duration, notice and cancellation policies.
- ☑ Verify any vague or missing terms about fees, rate increases or how many days of missed payment trigger a default.

Verify
- ☑ The property address and physical details.
- ☑ Use official websites and confirm phone numbers.
- ☑ Who you are speaking with, name, job title and contact.
- ☑ Verbal promises are in writing.
- ☑ Rental or storage details, costs and cancellation terms.

VERIFIED

Keep Records
- ☑ Save ads, listing information, contracts, receipts, invoices, repair request messages, signed agreements, move-in/out photos, videos, and payment confirmations.
- ☑ Deposit receipts. All written notices, land leases and fix-term agreements, disclosures, , and inspection reports.

Review bills promptly
- ☑ Check monthly statements, utility bills, fees and recurring charges.
- ☑ Look for sudden increases, repair or billing errors and dispute them in writing right away.

Consumer Tip:

Verbal promises are difficult to dispute later. Ask for important promises, changes, details, fees, unexpected repair invoices and any exceptions in writing. Read all documents carefully and ask questions before signing.

If you feel rushed, confused or pressured, PAUSE. You can take time to research, ask questions or walk away if needed.

2 WHAT TO WATCH FOR
Warning signs & unethical business practices

Not every bad experience is a scam or an unethical business practice. But certain practices should cause you to slow down and verify the information. Many unethical practices may involve concealment, deception, misrepresentation, or pressure tactics.

Fake listings or rental fraud
- Unavailable unit
- "Too good to be true" prices
- Fraudulent upfront "deposits to hold" before touring
- Pressure to pay quickly

Unexplained fees, charges or deductions
- Application or screening fees
- Duplicate or unexpected charges or deductions
- Late fees (when not late)

Storage unit issues
- Misleading prices or sizes available
- Hidden fees, high-cost plans or fees
- No copy of contract and terms
- Auction despite grace period

Manufactured home parks
- Unexpected or hidden fees
- Changes to lease or lot terms
- Maintenance or services issues

Landlord-Tenant
- Unethical deposit withholding or deductions
- Improper evictions
- Bait and Switch property
- Communication lacks a paper trail

Property Owner
- Guaranteed renters or profits
- Large upfront, screening or marketing fees
- Pressure to sign immediately

File a complaint or search Oregon's complaint database: oregonconsumer.gov

3 BEFORE, DURING & AFTER

Steps you can take to protect yourself, your family, and your community

A few simple steps can help prevent problems and facilitate a resolution if something goes wrong. Understand the terms of your agreements, financial obligations and confirm contact information independently.

PAUSE → CHECK→ ASK→ DOCUMENT

BEFORE

- [ ] Verify the property, company or manager (licenses and online reviews)
- [ ] Read the full agreement, contract and fine print.
- [ ] Confirm rental/unit is available and all terms are in writing.
- [ ] Ask about deposits, property details, repairs, utilities, and cancellation terms.
- [ ] Look for additional, automatic, or hidden fees.
- [ ] Document property's condition.

DURING

- [ ] Confirm the final amount and property details before paying and signing.
- [ ] Ask about fees/charges you don't understand.
- [ ] Compare bills with your written agreement.
- [ ] Use secure payment methods and official websites.
- [ ] Keep copies of all documents, receipts, and communications.
- [ ] Verify size, access and features match what was advertised.
- [ ] Read the fine print.

AFTER

- [ ] Review your statements and check for unexpected charges.
- [ ] Specify any concerns, potential errors in writing and request an itemized explanation for each.
- [ ] Save all records, photos and documents.
- [ ] Seek legal help for evictions, landlord-tenant issues or deposit disputes.
- [ ] Report fraud, scams or unethical business practices.

Consumer Tip: **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ASKING**

- What fees/charges are required, optional & non-refundable?
- What utilities or services are included and not included?
- How is rent collected, and late payments handled?
- Who is the licensed provider or manager?

4 WHERE TO GET HELP

Report problems and get support

If you believe a business has misled you, charged you unexpectedly or engaged in an unethical business practice you have options. Start by reviewing the details, contacting the business, documenting what happened, checking the fine print and report a concern.

Oregon Department of Justice
oregonconsumer.gov

Landlord-tenant resources
Find additional resources

Community Alliance of Tenants
oregoncat.org

Oregon Renter's Right Resource
oregonrentersrights.org

Manufactured Communities Resource Center
oregon.gov/ohcs/mmcrc

Federal Trade Commission
ftc.gov

Oregon Real Estate Agency
oregon.gov/rea

Legal Aid Services of Oregon
lasoregon.org

Oregon Housing and Community Services - Landlord & Tenant Resources
oregon.gov/ohcs

Oregon State Bar
osbar.org/public/ris

BEFORE YOU REPORT GATHER:

- [ ] Lease or rental contracts
- [ ] Receipts/invoices
- [ ] Ads/Listings
- [ ] Screenshots
- [ ] Agreements/terms
- [ ] Emails/texts/messages
- [ ] Contact information
- [ ] Date, time, location

Check information | **Document everything** | **Report issues**

File a complaint or search Oregon's complaint database: oregonconsumer.gov

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT:

Consumer Worksheet and Checklist

VERIFY BEFORE PAYING

I checked:

- ☐ The company/business using independent sources
- ☐ The property or unit is available.
- ☐ The advertised price with the agreement/contract.
- ☐ And confirmed all fees, deposits and terms.
- ☐ I received a copy of the signed agreement, contract and all paperwork.
- ☐ That I asked for important promises in writing.
- ☐ And avoided unusual payment methods.
- ☐ The property, unit or storage conditions.

CONTACT LOG:

Date: _____ Time: _____

Who I spoke with? _____

Their job title? _____

Property/Business: _____

Phone/Website: _____

What was offered, charged for or contacted about? _____

Did I feel pressured to act quickly?

☐ YES ☐ NO

NOTES: _____

CHECK THE CHARGES

Amount advertised: $ _____

Final amount in contract or agreement: $ _____

Will amount change in future:

☐ Yes ☐ No amount: $ _____

Extra fees or charges?

☐ Yes ☐ No Total: $ _____

What services are included?

_____

Are there any “free” services?

☐ Yes ☐ No

When do they end? _____

Need clarification on: _____

_____

GATHER RECORDS

- ☐ All legal documents (contracts, lease, rent statements, bills, invoices, notices, etc)
- ☐ Receipts, confirmation emails/letters and any supporting documents
- ☐ Webpage representations, screenshots, advertisements, offers, details and promotions
- ☐ Emails, texts, messages, notices, letters
- ☐ Names, dates, contacts or phone numbers
- ☐ Call logs, notes, timeline of events/people contacted or businesses

If you’ve already been scammed



Stop sending money, giving access to your accounts or information.



Contact your bank or financial institutions. Preferably in person.



Change your passwords and save all records and communications.



Report the incident and reach out for support.