



Press Release

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Register of Deeds offers free property fraud alert service

JONESBOROUGH — In an age of rampant fraud, Washington County Register of Deeds Teresa Bowman is taking a proactive approach by offering residents and businesses free protection against property and mortgage fraud.

“According to the FBI, property and mortgage fraud are among the fastest growing crimes in the nation,” Bowman said. “We offer free Property Fraud Alerts to homeowners and businesses, where they will be notified immediately if a document is filed in our office that includes their name or the name of their business. We think it is important to offer this service to those who entrust their property documents to us.”

To sign up for this fraud alert protection, users simply need to visit washingtoncountyttn.org and click on the Register of Deeds Office under Government. The online form requires an email address as those who register will be immediately notified by e-mail should a document be recorded that matches the criteria provided. You can set up alerts by name or a business name if documents are recorded in the Register of Deeds office that match the criteria they have provided.

Bowman added that users can register multiple names or businesses for the fraud alert. However, the alert is only as effective as the correct spelling of the name that is being monitored. Users can set up multiple alerts to monitor different spellings of their name or business if they are concerned that it might be missed.

“Fraud can strike any property owner,” Bowman said, “But some are more vulnerable: senior citizens, immigrants, those facing foreclosure, and those who have multiple properties – second

homes, vacation property or investment property. Also at risk are those who own unoccupied, abandoned, or distressed homes, lots or businesses.”

Another group that bears watching is property that has the name of a deceased owner on the deed. There have been reports of criminals watching the obituaries and acting quickly to forge the name of a deceased person on a deed, then recording the document and securing title. The perpetrators then use the property to secure loans. They default on the loans, and lenders seize the property.

For more information regarding this program, please contact the Register of Deeds Office at 753-1644.