



Inspector General Insights

Background: In the first half of 2022, a total of 817 cases of data compromises were recorded across the US, affecting over 53 million individuals.

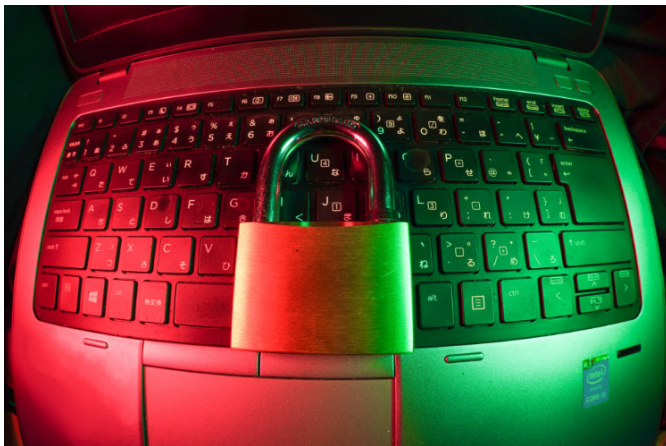
Property fraud is one of the fastest growing white-collar crimes in the US, and it is typically done by criminals through falsifying records and faking their identities. People are deceived into buying or renting the stolen properties, while the real property owners remain ignorant of the crime until damage has already been done.

Objective: In recognition of Cybersecurity Awareness Month, Clerk Crystal K. Kinzel encourages residents to register for a free Risk Alert Notification Program available on www.CollierClerk.com.

Scope / Methodology: The national data compromises described above vary from data breaches, data exposure, and data leakage, which are some of the causes of online identity theft.

Observations: The Collier County Clerk of the Court and Comptroller reminds the citizens of Collier County to stay vigilant of possible digital threats, highlighting identity theft leading to fraudulent activities this Cybersecurity Awareness Month.

“Through our Risk Alert Notifications, residents can quickly take action to report suspected fraud and protect their assets. It is a simple step that can save residents valuable time and money in restoring their records,” said Crystal K. Kinzel.



The Risk Alert Notification Program is a free service provided by the Clerk's office to prevent property fraud by allowing owners to monitor their property records. Upon registration, a link will be sent that allows them to add, edit, or delete party names and Official Records to monitor. Subscribers will receive an email if activity occurs on their records so that they can verify whether the transaction is valid.

Recommendations & Actions: The Clerk encourages the residents to register to the Risk Alert Notification Program which allows them to easily monitor suspicious activities on their official records and take the necessary actions to prevent further fraud.

Over the last year, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) investigated five complaints from residents regarding incidents of alleged home title theft or title fraud, where an unknown suspect attempted to steal a home or lot of land by transferring the title to their name without the homeowner's knowledge or consent. In two incidents reported to the Collier County Sheriff's office (CCSO) (OIG Cases 2021.030 and 2022.007), the unknown suspect successfully transferred the title and sold the lots without the owner's knowledge or consent.

The OIG conducted extensive research, retrieved and analyzed property records of the alleged victims, and worked with the CCSO and the Florida Office of Financial Regulation – Bureau of Financial Investigations as part of the law enforcement referral process. Both cases were eventually resolved, and each could have been either prevented or detected earlier by using the Risk Alert Notification Program.

Total # Transactions	Amounts Audited or Reviewed	Questioned Costs	Taxpayer Savings	# Observations / Recommendations
5	\$ 664,600.00	\$ 664,600.00	N/A	1