



Essex County register warns homeowners of deed scams

By David Liscio / The Daily Item

SALEM - For less than \$70, North Shore homeowners can order an official copy of their property title from an Illinois company, an offer which Southern Essex Register of Deeds John O'Brien warns is a scam.

"As spring arrives, so does the scam artist," said O'Brien, noting that a company called National Record Services, Inc. of Illinois is sending letters to Essex County property owners, informing them that for \$69.50, they can obtain an official copy of their deed. "This is nothing more than a consumer rip-off. This company is trying to scare people by telling them that the U.S. Government Federal Citizen Information Center recommends that property owners should have an official copy of their deed and that this company will provide one for \$69.50. This is absolutely outrageous and nothing more than a scheme."

The scam company purportedly is based in Northbrook, Ill. The offer, sent to homeowners, does indicate that property title copies are often available free or at nominal charge from the government.

According to O'Brien, the ruse isn't new.

In 2007, another company called National Deeds Service was making a similar offer for \$59.50. O'Brien said he exposed that scam, hoping it would not resurface in a different form.

The register explained that anyone who has purchased a home after 1983 can print a copy of their deed off the registry's Web site for free. A deed copy for any property purchased before 1983 can be obtained by calling the registry's customer service department at 978-542-1704 or by emailing southernsexcustomerservice@sec.state.ma.us.