



ERIK NASARENKO

VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

NEWS RELEASE



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Thousand Oaks Woman Pleads Guilty in Rental Fraud Scheme

VENTURA, Calif. – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that Jenifer Singh, AKA Jenifer Rios (DOB 11/02/78), of Thousand Oaks, pled guilty to two felony counts of grand theft of personal property.

In December 2023, Singh placed fliers at a Thousand Oaks laundromat advertising a home for rent in Simi Valley. A local family called the phone number on the flier and spoke to Singh, who claimed she was authorized to lease the home. In January 2024, the family paid Singh \$2,500 in cash to rent the property. The investigation in this case determined Singh did not own the Simi Valley home at the time she accepted funds to lease it, nor was she an authorized leasing representative of the true owner. The victims never received occupancy at the property and Singh never refunded the \$2,500 she accepted from them as a rental deposit on the home.

In March 2024, Singh placed a post on Facebook Marketplace advertising the same Simi Valley home for rent. A Simi Valley family saw Singh's post and called the phone number listed in the online ad. Shortly thereafter, Singh met the victim at the home and claimed she was authorized to rent the property. At this meeting Singh collected \$3,000 in cash as a supposed "deposit" on the property. Soon thereafter, Singh received an additional \$1,000 in cash from the same victim claiming she needed a medical procedure. At the time Singh collected the \$4,000 from this second victim, she did not own the Simi Valley home, nor was she authorized by the true owner to execute leases or accept rental funds for the property. Singh's second victim(s) also never received occupancy. Singh never returned the \$4,000 in cash the victim paid to lease the residence.

The District Attorney's Office encourages Ventura County residents to watch out for these red flags when using online rental advertisements to avoid becoming a victim of a scam:

- Too-Good-to-Be-True Prices: Online rental listings at below-market rent prices, especially for desirable properties, are often bait to lure victims.

- **Upfront Payment Demands:** Scammers request security deposits, rent, or fees (e.g., background and credit checks) before you have seen the property or signed a lease. Legitimate landlords typically verify tenants' qualifications before ever requesting payment.
- **No In-Person or Virtual Tour:** If the "landlord" refuses to show the property in person or via video call, claiming they are unavailable or out of town, this is a red flag.
- **Suspicious Contact Methods:** Communication solely through email, text, or apps like WhatsApp, with reluctance to speak by phone or in person, can indicate a scam.
- **Fake Listings or Stolen Photos:** Listings may use photos copied from other sites (e.g., Airbnb, Zillow) or generic stock images. Use reverse image search (like Google Images) to verify photos.
- **Pressure to Act Quickly:** Scammers often push victims to immediately send money, claiming high demand to prevent victims from researching the property before parting with cash.
- **Unusual Payment Methods:** Requests for payments via wire transfers, gift cards, cryptocurrency, or apps like Venmo are red flags. Legitimate landlords typically accept checks or other secure payment methods that are traceable.
- **Social media or Non-Standard Platforms:** Listings on platforms like Facebook Marketplace or Craigslist pose a higher risk for scams due to less oversight and the opportunity for the scammer(s) to hide their identity and pose as a legitimate landlord or owner of the subject property.

This case was investigated by the District Attorney's Office Real Estate Fraud Unit (REFU), in coordination with the Ventura County Sheriff's Office Fugitive Unit (VCSO Fugitive Unit) and Essex County Prosecutor's Office in Newark, New Jersey. Those two agencies coordinated efforts resulting in Singh's arrest on December 8, 2024, at the Newark Airport while attempting to board a flight to Paris, France. Shortly after Singh's arrest in New Jersey, she was extradited by the VCSO Fugitive Unit back to Ventura County to face charges in this case. Senior Deputy District Attorney Dominic Kardum, a member of the REFU, prosecuted the case.

Singh is scheduled to be sentenced on August 26, 2025, at 9:00 am in courtroom 12 of the Ventura County Superior Court. She faces up to three years and eight months in jail.

Case: 2024016010

Defendant Information:

Jenifer Singh
AKA: Jenifer Rios
Thousand Oaks, CA

Charges pled guilty to:

- PC 487(a) - Grand theft of personal property