

**“When cash-strapped consumers” are trying to sell their property, the last thing they need is to lose thousands of dollars to scam artists who promise a quick sale, but then provide no services at all," David Vladeck, director of the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection, said in a statement.**

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Complaint from a Timeshare Seller:

I received a call from Sean Myers, who told me he was on vacation in Florida and had seen my timeshare listed at a show. He asked if it was still for sale, would I take less money, amount of the yearly fees, etc. - common questions. Then he said his financier would be calling me. I received a call from Erin Jones who said she was with Worldwide Finance and they were financing the sale for Mr. Myers. She went through the usual shuck and jive, and then said I would need to put \$750 in a "secure account" through Western Union. She instructed me to go to the local Kroger or Food Lion and fill out a send-money form to put money in the secure account. She assured me they would not take the money unless our property failed the title search. If it passed, she would call me and I could take my receipt back to Kroger or Food Lion and my deposit would be refunded.

I could not find a business at the address she gave me. I called the Florida Department of financial services and was told me this company is not licensed in Florida. I figure they may be licensed somewhere else so the Florida Attorney General can't go after them. Further, I called Western Union and was told they do not put money into a secure account and then refund it - that it was a scam. These crooks are attempting to circumvent credit card cancellations by asking for cash up front in a unique way. BEWARE.

### Consumer Ally, In the News

A telemarketing ring that allegedly scammed millions from consumers nationwide looking to sell their timeshares was shut down by the Federal Trade Commission, the agency announced today. There were thousands of victims, the FTC told Consumer Ally.

The FTC won a temporary restraining order halting Timeshare Mega Media and Marketing Group Inc., two related companies and six people in connection with an ongoing investigation. A complaint filed in U.S. District Court in Fort Lauderdale claims they ran a telemarketing boiler room -- a call center where telemarketers use high-pressure sales tactics -- in Fort Lauderdale.

They allegedly told timeshare owners looking to sell their units that a buyer was ready to seal a deal, but a fee -- usually \$1,996 -- for sale-related costs including real estate agent, closing, title search and document fees was needed first.

A check of the phone numbers for Timeshare Mega Media listed on its website shows they are currently not in service. A short note on the site's contact page reads: "At this time we are no longer taking new customers, so that we can better serve our existing customers."

In its complaint, the FTC alleges that the upfront fee could range up to 10% of the timeshare's price, if the timeshare was an expensive unit. Consumers who paid the fee were told to expect a contract. Timeshare Mega Media did send a contract to consumers -- for marketing and advertising services, not a sales contract. The FTC said consumers who raised questions or wanted a refund were allegedly given a run-around.

The FTC's complaint was filed against Timeshare Mega Media, also doing business as Timeshare Market Pro Inc.; Timeshare Market Pro Inc.; Tapia Consulting Inc.; Joseph Crapella, also known as Joseph John Philbin; Pasquale Pappalardo; Lisa Tumminia Pappalardo; Pasqualino Agovino; Louis Tobias Duany; and Patricia A. Walker. The FTC is also seeking restitution for consumers in the case.

According to the FTC, the number of fake timeshare resale complaints has more than tripled over the past three years, as more consumers try to sell their timeshares.

In this case, the defendants allegedly defrauded consumers nationwide out of millions of dollars before being shuttered by the court. The South Florida Better Business Bureau, FTC and the Florida attorney general's office have received hundreds of complaints from consumers. The BBB gave Timeshare Mega Media an F rating, its lowest.