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Attorney general wants legal protection against 'house stealing'

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Steve Jefferson/Eyewitness News

Marion County - Indiana's attorney general wants you to be on the look out for someone trying to steal your home. Greg Zoeller says "house stealing" is already popular in neighboring states, but new laws to prevent it here may be a year away.

Don McCain has lived in his Irvington neighborhood home nearly 20 years. He's never thought about anyone trying to steal his house, so he's never checked his deed.

"I never really have given it thought. I used to be in the real estate business and never even heard of anybody being able to do that," said McCain.

House stealing is when someone quick claims their name onto your deed. That's usually followed by fraudulent bank loans against the property or even illegally selling the house.

The Marion County recorder's office is putting in new software right now to alert home owners about any deed changes. In major cities like Philadelphia, house stealing is a huge problem.

During a recorders conference Thursday, Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller and county recorders not only talked about preventing house stealing but also shared existing cases.

"In my county, we had where a gentleman who owned some property, someone took his rental property where someone quick claimed his deed," said Mike Brown, Lake County recorder.

About 20 counties in the state are already implementing a system to notify property owners of deed changes. "The important thing is anything that happens on your deed, you will be notified," said Pat Brooks, Warrick County recorder.

"Let's not wait until this has become a crisis where this has come across state lines," said Zoeller.

The attorney general says another target for house stealing is abandoned homes.

"It's scary someone can do those things," said McCain.

Check your deed

Still, a simple records check could make a huge difference for property owners.

To check your deed, contact your county recorder's office. Some offices offer online procedures, while others require you to phone in or appear in person.

Marion County recorder



Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller



An abandoned home in Marion County.



Don McCain mows his lawn.



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