

## WFG Underwriting Bulletin



To: All Texas Policy Issuing Agents of WFG National Title Insurance Company

From: WFG Underwriting Department

Date: February 15, 2023

Bulletin No.: TX 2023-09

Subject: Sales of Vacant Land and Unoccupied Property

---

Due to a dramatic increase in fraudulent activity, WFG is instituting the following requirements for all closings involving natural persons selling vacant land or unoccupied property.

1. Send your standard “welcome letter” to each seller via email ***and*** U.S. mail to the owner’s address listed on the County Appraisal District website.
  - a. As a new addition to that “welcome letter”, instruct the owner to contact your office immediately if the owner did not execute a contract to sell the property.
2. Carefully examine the seller’s ID, as it has become more common for fake IDs to be used in fraudulent transactions.
  - a. Confirm that the name and mailing address listed on the ID match the name and address as listed with the County Appraisal District.
  - b. Make sure that any Texas driver’s license displays:
    - A fine line pattern that runs through the background of the license;
    - Holographic images that appear when the ID is held to the light;
    - A laser cut image of the State of Texas when held to the light;
    - The word “directive” on the back of the ID that is missing the “dots” over the “i’s”; and
    - An embossed date of birth across the photo.
3. Confirm the signature on any deed of trust executed by the seller closely resembles the signature on the ID provided by the seller.

**NOTE:** The information contained in this Bulletin is intended solely for the use of employees of WFG National Title Insurance Company, its title insurance agents and approved attorneys. Disclosure to any other person is expressly prohibited unless approved in writing by the WFG National Title Insurance Company’s Underwriting Department.

**The Agent may be held responsible for any loss sustained as a result of the failure to follow the standards set forth above.**

4. The seller's signing must be:
  - a. Conducted in the presence of a title company employee, or
  - b. Notarized via remote online notarization ("RON") or a mobile notary vetted and approved by the title company.
  
5. Be aware of the following potential red flags associated with vacant land and/or unoccupied property fraud, and contact Texas underwriting counsel if they are not satisfactorily addressed:
  - Unencumbered (free and clear) property;
  - Demand to rush closing;
  - Listing agent has never met seller in person;
  - Email as the only form of communication with the seller (no in-person meetings, phone calls, video conferencing);
  - Documents notarized in places other than the location of the seller or property;
  - Request to wire seller funds to another state or country;
  - Contact with only one of multiple vested owners who claims to have signing authority for the other owners;
  - Investor or wholesaler preventing contact with the seller.

If you have questions or concerns with any transaction that may suggest fraud, contact Texas Underwriting Counsel at [SWLegal@wfgtitle.com](mailto:SWLegal@wfgtitle.com). And thank you for joining our fraud prevention efforts!

**NOTE:** The information contained in this Bulletin is intended solely for the use of employees of WFG National Title Insurance Company, its title insurance agents and approved attorneys. Disclosure to any other person is expressly prohibited unless approved in writing by the WFG National Title Insurance Company's Underwriting Department.

**The Agent may be held responsible for any loss sustained as a result of the failure to follow the standards set forth above.**