Protect Your Money: The Closing Protection Protocol

From your real estate agent. Two minutes to read. It can save you everything.

The four rules

1. Wiring instructions never change by email. Never. If an email says the instructions changed, it is fraud. No exceptions.

2. Verify by voice before any money moves. Call the title company on a number you already had (from this sheet, a business card, or a past call). Never use a number from inside the email.

3. We have a code word. Set one with me at our first meeting. If anyone calls about your money, and it sounds exactly like me, ask for the code word. AI can copy a voice from three minutes of audio.

4. Slow is safe. Every fraud rushes you. A real title company never minds a 10-minute delay to verify. If anything about money feels urgent, that urgency IS the red flag.

> **A suspicious email just arrived? Your next 10 minutes:** Do not reply. Do not click. Call me and the title company on numbers you already had. Forward the email to the title company by a separate channel (new email to their known address, or text). Then wait for voice confirmation.

The one sentence to remember

"If anything about money changes, it is fake until I hear my agent's voice on a number I already had."

En español: "Si algo cambia sobre el dinero, es falso hasta que escuche la voz de mi agente en un número que ya tenía."

FOR AGENTS (cut here or send the whole sheet)

Send it tonight, with this note:

"Real estate wire fraud has gotten much harder to spot, so we added one more layer of protection to every closing we handle. This one-pager covers it in two minutes. The main thing to remember: wiring instructions never change by email, and if anything about money ever looks off, call me first."

Your team's three rules (whoever touches wires; no TC? then you are the TC):

Never change or release instructions from an inbound call. Call back on the number in the file, every time. The code word applies inside the team too.

Lock your own inbox today:

MFA on your email. Unique password from a password manager. Bookmark your MLS, CRM, and bank logins; from an email, go to the bookmark, never the link. Check your email forwarding rules; that is where break-ins hide. Most wire fraud starts in an inbox.

Buyer-side reps:

The same call-back rule protects earnest money and option fees. On vacant land or non-owner-occupied deals, the tells are yours to catch: remote seller, rush to close, below-market price. Ask title what they verified.

Office adoption pitch (say it at your next sales meeting): "One sheet, four rules, protects every file. Can we make this our standard?" This is client protection communication, not advertising; if your office reviews client-facing documents, that line gets it approved for everyone at once.

The First 60 Minutes

Money just went to a fraudster. You do not rise to the occasion; you fall back on this checklist. Speed decides everything: the FBI froze 58% of attempted fraud transfers in 2025, and recovery odds collapse after 72 hours. Hours matter more than lawyers.

1 **Call the RECEIVING bank's fraud department.**
Ask for a wire recall and a fraud hold on the receiving account. The wiring instructions the victim used show the receiving bank. This call is the race.

2 **Call your own bank (or the client's bank).**
Report the fraudulent transfer, request a SWIFT recall / hold. Get a case number.

3 **File at ic3.gov. Today, not tomorrow.**
The FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center. Ask about the Recovery Asset Team, the team that can freeze funds when notified fast. Reported within 72 hours, recovery odds have run about two in three; after that they collapse.

4 **Call the title company.**
They can flag the file, stop further disbursements, and alert their underwriter. [Alamo Title fraud line: CONFIRM with Audrey]

5 **Notify your broker and E&O; carrier. In writing.**
Same day. Documentation of a followed protocol matters to coverage.

6 **Local police report.**
Get the report number; banks and insurers will ask for it.

Fake listing or someone using your identity?

Report it the same hour, in this order: the portal it appears on (Zillow: Report Listing link on the listing page; Facebook Marketplace: Report; Craigslist: flag), your MLS (HAR: fraud@har.com or your board's compliance line [CONFIRM]), then ic3.gov. Warn your sphere with one post so renters stop wiring deposits.

Am I exposed? (the short version)

Use the Texas REALTORS Wire Fraud Warning form, TXR 2517, on every file; it is in zipForm and at texasrealestate.com/realtorforms, and it works for residential, commercial, and farm and ranch. E&O; coverage varies by policy; notify your carrier in writing the same day and ask specifically about social-engineering coverage. A documented, followed protocol is your best position. This sheet is education, not legal advice.

Why this sheet exists

FBI IC3, 2025: 12,368 real estate fraud complaints, $275.1 million lost, most of it wire fraud at closings. That is roughly $750,000 stolen from closings every day. Median loss when a fraudster impersonates a seller and takes the proceeds: $343,497 (CertifID, 2026). Vacant land is ground zero. The scams pass the eye test now. The process is the protection.