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Date: Tue, Mar 15, 2016 at 11:38 AM  
Subject: alert from Baltimore County

Greetings,

My name is Ed Riesner, Chief Electrical Inspector for Baltimore County. I am reaching out to the Baltimore County community associations to address a growing concern.

The downturn in the economy and the crash of the housing market has created a dangerous problem which we are working to resolve.

House flipping is an opportunity for a person or group of persons to purchase a building at a low price, fix it up at minimal cost, then sell the property quickly at a profit. While house flipping is legal we are finding that some (not all) of these flippers are using unqualified people to install plumbing fixtures, electrical wiring, equipment, and devices in order to save costs. They do not obtain the required permits or go through the required inspection process because they use unlicensed, unqualified people who are unable to obtain those permits.

Through complaints generated by homeowners and by other means our inspectors are frequently called to these houses for inspection.

Much of the work that our inspectors have encountered in these illegally flipped buildings is dangerous. Lack of effective grounding, open splices, improper connections (especially those involving aluminum wiring), over-fused circuits, overloaded electrical boxes, and unsafe structural changes are just a few of the dangerous conditions we are finding.

These dangerous conditions must be repaired in order to avoid fire and shock hazards. Unfortunately, the onus for the repair falls on the current owner of the property. Typically the illegal flipper has sold the property and is out of the picture so Baltimore County residents are being left with repairs which are often in the thousands of dollars.

We need your help. Every day we encounter more and more of these illegally flipped houses. We do not have the resources required to identify and address all of the homes currently being flipped illegally. I am hoping that if we all work together we can, at the very least, alert our citizens so that they can make an informed decision when buying or renting.

I am asking that you please advise your members; if they are buying or renting a home in Baltimore County that has been recently renovated, has new plumbing fixtures or has new electrical fixtures, equipment, or devices to insist that the seller provide the Electrical, Plumbing, or Building permits as evidence that the work was performed by a qualified contractor licensed to do such work.

A homeowner can still replace any switches, receptacles, or lights without a permit, but a contractor entering your home to perform plumbing or electrical work must be licensed by Baltimore County and must have a permit before they begin working. General contractors performing work in a home must have a MHIC license.

I appreciate your time and I apologize if I have contacted the wrong person.

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