

## **PREVENTING SQUATTERS FROM MOVING INTO YOUR VACANT HOUSE**

Squatters in your vacant property can be a frustrating, costly, and time consuming problem. If they are able to establish residency they are difficult to get out and may have to be evicted.

Squatting is a nationwide problem and some reports indicate squatting may be on the rise. If you search the web, you find countless stories of people squatting and the nightmares the property owners must endure to remove them. There are even online guides and other resources providing information on “How to Squat.”

### **Here are a few tips to keep your vacant property from falling victim to squatters.**

- \* Check your property often to make sure it is secure and unoccupied (at least weekly, if not more often)
- \* Maintain the property (Neglected properties are often targets of squatters)
- \* Talk with neighbors and let them know the property is vacant. Provide them with a way to contact you in the event they see anyone at your property.
- \* Register your property as “vacant” with the City of Palmdale’s Neighborhood Compliance office (the City of Palmdale and many other cities require this anyway). This helps provide documentation that no one is supposed to occupy the location. Should someone move in without your knowledge, you would have a declaration on file to contest their tenancy in court.
  
- \* If your property is located in the cities of Palmdale or Lancaster, file a “Declaration of Ownership” with your local Sheriff’s station (California Civil Code

527.11 & 527.12). You must also comply with a few requirements set forth in the code. This provides a streamlined process to remove squatters should they manage to get in.

\* If you purchase a foreclosed property - Go to the home regularly before you close the deal to see who is occupying the house. If you see signs of squatters make sure they are moved out before you close on the home. If you don't, you could become a landlord to squatters who you would have to evict yourself. This could take months. In the mean time you could be stuck paying taxes, insurance, and house payments while the squatters live for free.

If squatters manage to take up residency and you must evict them, do so as soon as possible. Do not enter into any verbal agreement allowing the squatters to stay for a period of time to move out. Once you give the squatters permission to stay, the court could view that as a verbal tenancy agreement – prolonging the eviction process.

**If you find squatters, trespassers, or burglars at your vacant house:  
call the Sheriff's Station.**