

For Immediate Release

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Property owners in Indiana are receiving letters from a company asking for \$285 for a property alert monitoring system. Such an alert system is available free from your Monroe County Recorder's Office. Another company is offering to send you a copy of your deed, "the only document that shows you own your home," for more than \$100. Copies of your deed are available in the Recorder's Office for \$1.00 per page. Most deeds are 1-3 pages according to Monroe County Recorder Amy Swain.

And veterans are being targeted as well. Some have received letters that a company can "expedite the processing" of their DD-214, or military discharge, for more than \$100. Copies can be obtained for free from your local Veterans Service Office or the Recorder's Office.

"If your DD-214 isn't available locally, getting it from the National Archives takes about 2 months," said Veterans Service Officer Steven Miller. He clarified, stating that "There is no way to expedite it through a paid service. However, if a veteran has a genuine emergency — such as an upcoming burial, surgery, natural disaster or housing crisis — we can submit an expedited request through our office at no charge."

"Veterans can obtain copies of their DD-214s at no charge in our office as well record them," explained Recorder Swain who went on to say, "We're trying to reach as many people as possible, in as many ways as possible."

In partnership with Doxpop, the Property Watch early warning service notifies a property owner same day when a new document that references a person's name or property is recorded. The sign-up page online asks for name, and then uses that to identify land parcels owned. A watch is then set on both name and legal description of the property or properties. If it is a very common name like "John Smith," it can be set up so that only property is watched to prevent too many notifications. A text or email alert can be selected.

Most counties in Indiana provide this free service and provide the other services mentioned above. The Property Watch system from Doxpop is offered in about half of all Indiana counties, and the Property Fraud Alert system by Fidar covers about half as well. Monroe County uses the Property Watch system. Signing up can be done by clicking the link on the Recorder's web page. <https://www.in.gov/counties/monroe/government/recorder/>

"We want to take proactive steps to help protect our residents. For most people, their property is the biggest investment they will ever make. And veterans and their families shouldn't be taken advantage of when it's available for free locally," said Amy Swain, Monroe County Recorder, and added "That's why the big push to promote these services before people receive the letters."

While property alerts do not prevent fraud from happening, it provides an early warning system for property owners to take appropriate actions should they determine possible fraudulent activity has taken place. "Thank goodness the foreclosure fraud at Graceland was caught before the auction took place," said Swain.

"Although this type of crime is rare in Indiana due to our recording requirements and notary laws, it is on the rise nationwide, and we want to be proactive and help people have a piece of mind when it comes to the security of their property," said Swain.

To get started with the simple process of signing up online, property owners can also go to <https://watch.doxpop.com> (Note the word "watch" in place of "www").

If anyone in Monroe County is confused or has questions about Property Watch, call Doxpop at 866-369-7671 during working hours for help. If necessary, they'll work to get someone signed up over the phone.

For a more complete property profile, the Recorder may direct you to the County Assessor or the County Auditor depending on the information needed.

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