

# Round Rock police say man posed as real estate agent

## Police say Timothy Alonzo Nero scammed at least five people out of hundreds of dollars in real estate rental scam.

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Timothy Alonzo Nero did everything he could to convince customers he was a legitimate real estate agent, Round Rock police say.

The 25-year-old had business cards, a convincing company name — BGN Management— and two office addresses. In at least one case, he had a key to the home he was trying to rent out.

But after Nero collected \$25 for an application fee and \$499 for a discounted first month's rent, his potential renters found that the key he'd given them to 1008 Howell Terrace Place home didn't work, police say.

They'd been scammed, police say. Nero's story worked on at least five people between May 24 and Tuesday, Round Rock police officer Eric Poteet said.

"He would walk each victim through the process just as if he was a real estate agent leasing a house to somebody," Poteet said. "He took care of every detail."

The wrong key, Poteet said, "was the first indication of a problem."

They then found that the home was for sale, not for lease. And Nero wasn't selling it.

The phone number on Nero's business card was for a disposable phone that was turned off, Poteet said. The addresses on his card were for the San Marcos City Hall and the Hays County landfill.

Nero has never been licensed as a real estate agent by the Texas Real Estate Commission, according to an arrest warrant affidavit.

**Nero faces a charge of with one count of theft of more than \$500, a class A misdemeanor, with bail set at \$3,000, Poteet said. Nero had not been arrested as of Thursday. More charges could be filed against him, Poteet said.**

**The alleged victims had responded to a posting on the Web site Craig's List for a four-bedroom home with hardwood floors, a large kitchen pantry and fenced-in backyard for \$800 a month without a credit check, the affidavit said.**

Nero, who went by the last name of Hero, showed several homes in Round Rock to the potential renters before convincing them that the house on Howell Terrace Place was the best buy, Poteet said.

Most of the victims were convinced after looking at the home from the outside, Poteet said. At least one person saw the home's interior, he said.

Poteet said investigators do not know how Nero obtained a key to the home.

"He aroused not a single suspicion," Poteet said. The alleged victims "went on their way assuming that they were about to move into the house, until the moment they put the key in the door."

Poteet said Nero was seen driving a silver 2006 Nissan Altima with the Texas license plate number 560-XWP. Anyone with information is asked to call Round Rock police at 218-5500.

**In August, Austin police charged Francisco David Garza with theft of more than \$1,500, a state jail felony, after they said he advertised apartments for subletting on Craig's List last summer, an arrest affidavit said.**

After at least five people paid him about \$2,200 total for the apartments in the West Campus area near the University of Texas, which he did not own or have permission to sublease, he disappeared, the affidavit said.

**In most cases, the victims found that the apartments were occupied or their keys didn't work, the affidavit said.**

**Courtesy of JB Goodwin**