

# Deeds Status as of July 21, 2023: "Cautiously Optimistic"

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## Status

As of July 21, we are still unable to record deeds. We do not have phones, internet, email, or computers. However, I am cautiously optimistic we will be back in business soon.

Many of you may have seen the Delaware state news article about the general status of the Kent County network issues. (A copy is attached.)

The article has good information for you, the Kent County resident, but since it does not mention Deeds status, I am updating you specifically on that now.

## Technical Stuff

Fixing the network problem is a complicated process with many moving parts, all of which must be accomplished and tested before we can record.

- Kent County (KC) IT must clean or replace the Deeds server with a new one.
- A dedicated VPN tunnel will be recreated; a new firewall reinstalled
- Kent County will set up a new clean network, and our server will run on that while the rest of the network is restored.
- Our Land Records Management System Vendor must reinstall their Application on the KC server.
- All of our workstations must be replaced with either new hardware or be wiped clean (including time-stamp machines, scanners)
- KC IT must reload the LRMS Application software on our workstations

As soon as we can project a date, we will advise you. Thanks for your patience so far!

### Where are your documents? Are they safe?

Everything from July 7 backward was backed up off-site before the intrusion. You can access it by going to [uslandrecords.com](https://uslandrecords.com). You can also access it by clicking the temporary KC landing page link.

Everything from July 7 after 3 pm is waiting to be downloaded in the order received from the cloud to the Kent servers once they are clean.

Paper documents are in our office in the order received.

Please continue to upload to your e-doc vendor, hand-delivering, or mailing in your paper docs as usual.

Some of you may be considering Gap Title Insurance.

- The Kent County Recorder of Deeds takes no stance on that topic.
- We are not recording anything at this time. Should the situation change from when you submitted your documents or should Bring Downs by Title Searcher discover a reason for you to withdraw your submitted documents, we can accommodate that. Right now, nothing is moving forward.
- If paper, ask for them back.
- If submitted electronically, let us know the buyer and seller/lender/lendee's names, and we will not record that document when it appears on our screen. (we cannot see what is in the queue.)
- If we have already recorded it, we can void it.
- Again, it will be in the order received when we resume recording.

### Workload Catch-Up Plans

Once hardware and software are up and running, my team will work diligently to catch up quickly.

Simplifile and CSC will allow us to record an extra hour daily until we catch up (with the current backlog and the higher-than-normal expected workload once your settlements resume.) The extra hour is for Simplifile and CSC financial tabulations only. It will not change the 3 pm cut-off date we have established for receiving your new work daily.

We hope to soon re-attain the standard we have been setting of late--recording everything we receive by 3 pm on the day it is received.

### Fraud Protection Alert Sign-Up is still possible even while KC network down

While we are not aware this hostile intrusion has impacted our LRMS, it has created angst among the citizens. Registering for our new Fraud Protection Alert software helps to reduce that angst.

Please encourage your clients to sign up for the Fraud Protection Alert Software. Use [pfa.uslandrecords.com](https://pfa.uslandrecords.com) to do this. If you do not already have the PDF version of the fact sheets pertaining to this (see jpg examples attached) please get in touch with us. Handing these out will help your clients learn how to check their property records and sign up for fraud protection software for the future.

In addition or alternately, please hand out the postcard we designed. Contact us for a Publisher version so you can put your logo on the front (vs. Kent County building). Or, send Recorder Thornton your artwork and what you want it to say, and she will design p1 for you. A thousand postcards will cost about \$200 to print in one day at a local print shop.

### Communication.

We are doing the best we can to keep you informed:

- Please continue to share this news with other interested parties, as we have limited communication methods and no access to documents formerly stored on our desktop computers.
- Tom Carney sent an update yesterday via his Real Estate Bar Association channels.
- For official Kent County updates, please use the County FB page or the Delaware State News, the county paper of record.
- Friend Eugenia Thornton - Kent County Recorder of Deeds, on Facebook for UNOFFICIAL updates. <https://www.facebook.com/genekentcountyderecorderofdeeds>.
- As of last Friday, you can call our office at 744-2314. We have two cell phones we pass around.
- Yesterday, the folks from IT were in our office, hopefully as a prelude to replacing our workstations.
- You can reach Recorder Thornton 24/7 at [Eugenia.thornton@KentCountyde.gov](mailto:Eugenia.thornton@KentCountyde.gov)

## Attachments

Delaware State News - general county status as of July 18.

# State police, FBI join Kent network hack investigation

**By Craig Anderson**

Delaware State News

DOVER — As Kent County information technology personnel worked to restore full network operations Monday following an outside intrusion, an official confirmed that federal and state law enforcement are investigating the breach.

Delaware State Police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation are on the case, Kent County Levy Court Administrator Ken Decker said.

The county's network was compromised July 8, leaving some Levy Court services available, others limited and some unavailable, Finance Director Susan Durham said. Mr. Decker reported that "The county can accept a wide range of payment methods including paying in person, by mail, through a digital payment like an ACH (an electronic funds transfer).

"The county can extend deadlines for local payments for services like sewer. We don't have the authority to extend deadlines established by the state of Delaware. Also, he said, "We're hopeful that the disruption will be resolved long before things like taxes are due. While we have seen some residents frustrated, most citizens have been supportive and understanding.

"Living in a digital world means dealing with digital crimes."

Levy Court staff is working to restore the network fully along with outside entities, Mr. Decker said.

Today's regularly scheduled Kent County Levy Court meeting will proceed as planned and Mr. Decker said.

"The commissioners have a full agenda of routine business, and this will be our first opportunity to conduct an in- person briefing with the board," he said.

The briefing will occur in executive session because the discussion will involve the investigation and ongoing cybersecurity issues, Mr. Decker said.

The county is working to ensure that routine business services like getting a marriage license or building permit are available, Mr. Decker said.

While County IT Administrator Joe Simmons was reluctant to provide any specific repair timeline, he did say "We're making good progress."

Mr. Simmons indicated that the pace of repair would increase and a county news release said there's "an eye towards returning to normal business operations in the coming week."

As reported previously, the news release said, core county's services like 911 Dispatch and wastewater treatment have operated continuously. The county opened for business Monday morning, but routine operations were disrupted by ongoing work to repair and restore local servers and networks, it said.

*Staff writer Craig Anderson can be reached at 302- 741- 8296 or [canderson@iniusa.org](mailto:canderson@iniusa.org). Follow @DSNAnderson on Twitter.*

## Issue Paper Explore Property Records from Anywhere—Free

### Recorder of Deeds

*Serving Kent County with pride by using property records industry standards and best practices to make transactions faster, safer, & more convenient for everyone*



#### Explore Property Records from Anywhere—Free



Most people who use the County's public land records database are professional title searchers, real estate attorneys, paralegals, realtors, and surveyors. But average citizens may find it instructive and fun to trace the ownership history of their current home.

In addition, a few times a week, citizens call or come to the Deeds office to verify the ownership of their property records.

Citizens can do this themselves from the comfort and privacy of their own homes.



Refer to 30 1874, look in Deeds in the Deeds office. Thereafter, look online.

In addition to our electronic records, we also have books dating back to when the Dutch

granted lands from 1646 to 1657 and when the Duke of York granted lands from 1657 to 1680.

We don't have all records: the British destroyed some when they captured New Castle during the Revolutionary War!

Using any computer, follow this link: <https://ip.usolandrecords.com/De/Kent2/0/default.aspx>, or use the camera on your smartphone to enter the site using this QR code.



Type a name in the search box and access electronic records as far back as January 30, 1874. Researching and viewing are free, but a nominal charge occurs for downloading/printing. There are download/printing three options:

**Need just a few pages?** Use the PayPal portal to pay \$7.00 per page with your PayPal account or credit or debit card.

**More than 25 pages in one month?** Take a 30-day unlimited download subscription for \$50.

**Don't have a computer?** Visit the Recorder of Deeds office at the Kent County Building, 555 Bay Road, Dover. We have several computers for public use. We cannot help you with your title search but will print pages for \$1.00 each.

In addition to this US Land Records database, Kent County maintains its own database—also free to use—that shows taxes, permits, etc. To access that database, click: <https://kcpms.co.kent.de.us/>. Print free from your home.

To learn more, contact the Honorable Eugenia Thornton, Kent County Recorder of Deeds.




- No need to come or call the deeds office.
- Use any device connected to the internet.
- Use QR code or URL to access.
- Viewing is free.
- Copies \$2.00 per page; unlimited copies \$50 for 30-day subscription.
- Use the PayPal portal, using your PayPal account, or your debit/credit card.
- Free computers in the Deeds office and copies \$1.00 per page.
- Questions? Call Hon. Eugenia Thornton.

555 Bay Road, Dover, DE 19801 302 744 2521 [recorder@kentcountyde.gov](mailto:recorder@kentcountyde.gov)

<https://www.co.kent.de.us/recorder-of-deeds-office.aspx>


### Explore your property records, step-by-step




The History of your home and property can be fun and instructive to research on your own. Photos are provided to show you where to look on the page.

Use any device connected to the internet. Visit the Kent County Website. From the main page, select "ONLINE" from the drop down menu. Select "Deeds Documents."

From the "Welcome to Kent County Real Property Search" page, look at the top center. First Select "Name Search" and then enter your legal name on the search bar.



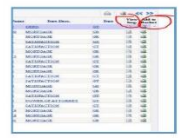
Select "Search" to see all the Kent County land documents indexed in your name. (See footnote to learn about indexing, and what to do if you see something you don't recognize.) You will only find property in Kent County here.



Click "View Image" to view the document(s). To check current ownership, look at the most recent. To discover history, go back through time, noting Book and Page and names of previous owners. There is no charge for looking.


To download and/or print, return to the "Welcome to Real Property" page.

Select "add to basket" documents for download/print. If you have not already registered, you will be invited to do as a "New Subscriber." If you want to print a few pages, choose "Personal." (\$2.00 per page) or to print a lot, choose "Subscription-30." (Unlimited downloads for 30 days—\$50.)



PayPal payment method does not require a PayPal account. But you must Select PayPal to check-out to use either PayPal or a credit card. Follow instructions on the screen.

You are also welcome to come to the Deeds office and use one of our public access computers. Ask one of the clerks to print out the documents you want for \$1.00 per page.



Now, you can ensure the title to your home doesn't contain unpleasant "surprises," and explore the history of your property. We recommend you take the next step and register for Property Transaction Alerts to keep on top of what is recorded in your name. Go back to the "Welcome to Kent County page" and select Property Fraud Alert in paragraph 2.

Footnote: When documents are recorded, each entry associated with the document is "indexed" for future searching. Your name, other owner's names, mortgage companies, lien holders, etc. If you see a name you do not recognize, contact the mortgage company or your closing attorney for explanation. If you detect fraud, notify a police investigation from the jurisdictional agency over the property. Please do not contact the Deeds office as we cannot offer legal advice.

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This is a jpg; it is not interactive. Contact [Eugenia.thornton@kentcountyde.gov](mailto:Eugenia.thornton@kentcountyde.gov) for a PDF you can reprint.

## Issue Paper Why Register for Property Transaction Alerts?

Details	How to Register
<p>In a few minutes, citizens can lessen the damages caused by Property Fraud, as well as be up to the minute on legitimate transactions that are recorded in their names.</p> <p><b>YOU MUST HAVE AN EMAIL TO USE THIS SERVICE!</b> The phone alert is not activated. Only the email.</p> <p>If you do not have your own email, ask your attorney, your power of attorney, the executor of your will, or a very good friend to register in your name using their email address.</p> <p>You may register as many names as you like. Suggest you look at your credit report and register any variations of your name found there.</p> <p>While more than one name or variation of a name may be registered, only one email will be used for the alert. If you want more than one email, you must register again using that email.</p> <p>You may add, subtract, or delete names as often as you like.</p> <p>If you have a common name, you may get a lot of false alerts.</p> <p>There is NO PRINT FEATURE on the software. The alert will direct you to use the US Land Records software to research the document if you are unsure what it is. Please review the Recorder of Deeds Issue Paper "Explore Property Records from Anywhere—Free" for details of how to review documents recorded in your name.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"><p>An alert does not mean illegal or unauthorized activity. It means a property transaction has been recorded in your name.</p></div>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Using the URL or QR code on the opposite page, click "Register Now" to start your registration.</li><li>2. After accepting the terms of the web site agreement you will be prompted to enter an email address (email address of the recipient of the notifications) and phone numbers.</li><li>3. The next page will prompt you to select the counties for which you wish to be notified. Select Kent County, DE. (If you own in NCC or Sussex, you must go to their respective Recorder of Deeds websites to register. All three counties have similar alert software.)</li><li>4. Select EMAIL for the notification method (email is the only option available. The phone alert is not activated.)</li><li>5. The next page is where you will specify the list of names of physical persons (First Name and Last Name) or organizations (Business Name) which will be monitored in the documents recorded in the counties previously selected.</li><li>6. The final page summarizes your registration selections. You will see the counties selected, notification method, and subscription duration.</li><li>7. Press Finish to complete the registration.</li><li>8. You will receive a confirmation email from PFA.DoNotReply@avenueinsights.com</li><li>9. When documents are recorded in your name from now on, you will receive a DO NOT REPLY email directly from AVENU, our vendor. It will tell you the type of document that has been recorded and direct you to US Land Records to review the document for yourself.</li><li>10. Refer to our "Explore Property Records from Anywhere—Free" issue paper for step by step instructions.</li><li>11. If you see a name you do not recognize, contact the mortgage company or your closing attorney for explanation. If you detect fraud, initiate a police investigation from the jurisdictional agency over the property. Please do not contact the Deeds office as we cannot offer legal advice.</li></ol>

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### Recorder of Deeds

Serving Kent County with pride by using property records industry standards and best practices to make transactions faster, safer, & more convenient for everyone



### Why Register for Property Transaction Alerts?

As early as 2008, the FBI warned about Dark Web thieves using false identities to "steal" houses. Examples:

- Inscrupulous homes needed or "sold" by thieves impersonating owners.
- Wiring instructions intercepted and redirected to false accounts.
- Also deeds recorded; used by squatters to keep the police at bay while thieves abscond at night.

The US Secret Service and the American Land Title Association warned of "seller impersonation" scams in Spring 2023.

In one week, May 2023, the Kent County Realtors Association said four Dover properties were put up for sale by someone who did not own them. In June, Troop 3 detectives investigated the fraudulent listing of a vacant lot near Lebanon.

Buyers should be suspicious if properties are listed online for bargain prices, quick closings, and cash sales using "sellers" notary. Empty lots, vacant land, vacation homes, and houses without mortgages are targeted.

Properties cannot be "stolen" from lawful owners using fraudulent documents. Property fraud is rare. However, it takes time and money to set things right when thieves borrow against, rent out, or pose as sellers for properties they do not own. The longer the crime goes undetected, the more complex the case becomes and the more expensive to rectify the damage.

Lawyers, realtors, and mortgage companies do their best to prevent fraud, yet cybercrime continues to grow. Several states are drafting Property Theft laws. Ads on radio and TV urge property owners to buy \$1.60 a year commercial "insurance" claiming to "protect" against title thieves. Sussex, New Castle, and—as of

June 2023—Kent offer Industry Best Practice fraud alert software to minimize damage by alerting victims within days of recordation. **Registration is FREE!**

Besides quickly discovering fraud, property owners benefit significantly from the transparency of prompt notice of legitimate recordings.



Use your cell phone camera to access this QR code or go to

<https://pfa.uslandrecords.com/default.aspx> to register for free notifications whenever your name is part of a property transaction recordation.

Of course, most transactions are legitimate: liens removed, equity lines of credit added, houses legitimately sold, etc.

In this day and age of increasing cybercrime, it is better to be safe than sorry.

#### Recorder of Deeds & the Law

Documents must be in "recordable format" before we upload to the data base: it is legible, has buyer and seller, TAX ID #, notary, margins and paper to standard, etc.

Our time stamp on the recording sets precedence for encumbrances, so speed is important as well as accuracy.

We do not slow the recording process to inquire if signatures are fake, or if used by the seller is real.

Delaware Law: "It is not the Recorder's responsibility to ensure the accuracy or legality of the documents themselves, except insofar as they qualify to be recorded. Security for that lies outside the scope of recording."

Learn more. Contact the Honorable Eugenia Thornton, Kent County's Recorder of Deeds.



555 Bay Road, Dover, DE 19901 302 / 44 2521 [Recorder@kentcountycle.gov](mailto:Recorder@kentcountycle.gov)  
<https://www.co.kent.de.us/recorder-of-deeds-office.aspx>

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## Postcard Explore Your Property's History and Secure its Future



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