



# ORCA TALES

*"We can tell you more about them than their mother"*

## NARPM 2005 NORTHWEST REGIONAL CONFERENCE & VENDOR TRADE SHOW

"Dream Big, Make It Happen"

The Marriott Hotel, Seatac, Washington March 18th - 20th

Earn Clock Hours!

Full Day of Classes

Welcome Reception

Key Note Speakers

Local and National Vendors

Networking

Workshops

Prizes

For Information Call: April Sanders, Property Manager of:  
Coldwell Banker Tara @ 360-331-7100

## Rebekah Near - Speaker at NARPM NW Regional Conference

Rebekah Near of ORCA Information will give two classes at the NARPM NW Regional Conference. On Saturday, March 19, 2005 she will be instructing the following CLOCK HOUR CLASSES:

**Establishing a Residential Acceptance Policy  
&  
The New Domestic Violence Law**

For more information on this conference, classes, and speakers call April Sanders at 360-331-7100.

## "IT'S JUST THAT EASY"

### ORCA INFORMATION, INC. IS YOUR WATCHDOG!!

They don't call them Killer Whales for nothing. We are working hard to make your apartment communities a safer place and assist you in minimizing your liabilities. That is why currently we are moving towards Equifax and Experian Credit Bureaus for our credit reports. LOOK FOR THIS CHANGE.

**WE ARE FINDING MORE INFORMATION** on the Equifax credit reports and less mistakes. That means Equifax gives more information about your applicant. Orca wants you to have the best.

**EASY TO READ EQUIFAX CREDIT REPORT** reference sheets are available at your request. These reference sheets will assist you in understanding the codes on the Equifax credit reports. This handy dandy "cheat sheet" makes Equifax reports easy to understand - "It's just that easy".

**ASK YOUR SCREENER** for help understanding the Equifax credit reports. They are there to serve you in every way - Just ask. At the bottom of every report is the name and extension of the screener that processed your report - "It's just that easy".

### QUESTIONS? CONCERNS?

Call Rebekah at ext. 103 or Katie at ext. 101

## Where and How to Obtain Criminal Records There is NO Central Location of Records

Contrary to popular belief, obtaining a criminal record is not as easy as going on a computer and getting thumbs up or thumbs down. There are over 10,000 state and federal court-houses in the United States, spread out over some 3,300 jurisdictions, each with its own database of records. There is no national computer database of these criminal records available.

Yes, the FBI and state law enforcement have access to a national computer database called the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). However, it is absolutely illegal for most private companies to obtain criminal information from law enforcement computer databases without specific legal authorization. Government criminal checks are only available for positions such as schoolteachers or childcare workers or other positions where state or federal law specifically mandates such a check.

**Remember: Due Diligence -  
Your Responsibility to the Community**

## The Real Story About FBI's Criminal Record Database

The FBI database's formal name is the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and is an automated database of criminal justice and justice related records maintained by the FBI. The sources of the FBI's information are the counties and states that contribute (they are not required to contribute) information as well as the federal justice agencies. Two important points about the NCIC are—

1. The NCIC is not nearly as complete as portrayed in the movies. Because of the chain of events that must happen in multiple jurisdictions in order for a crime to appear in NCIC, many records of crime do not make it.
2. The information the NCIC does have is predominantly arrest-related. The disposition of most crimes (Guilty, Not Guilty, etc.) in NCIC must be obtained by going to the adjudicating jurisdiction.

Occasionally you may happen upon a "good deal." This good deal usually consists of a friend in law enforcement that obtains criminal records from NCIC and provides them free or sells them to the employer. The problem is that this is illegal, and the Feds have been targeting and prosecuting violators.

\*\*\*Safe Hiring Manual

## TAKE TIME TO HIRE RIGHT

[PART II.]

By Bill Nye, Ph.D.

*\*Continued from last month's newsletter...*

**Passing the Test:** Many management companies use a variety of tests to help them during the selection process. Elizabeth Heller with Westdale Asset Management in Atlanta, said "The use of a maintenance skill test is critical in hiring maintenance personnel." A good maintenance test should cover the full spectrum of maintenance tasks. It should have questions regarding HVAC, plumbing, electrical, appliances, pool maintenance and general knowledge. One such test is currently available at GraceHill.com.

Another example is the "bucket test" used by Rick Ellis of Ellis Property Management Services. In his test, Ellis puts various parts into buckets and then has the candidate explain what it is, how it is used and how it is repaired or replaced. Surprisingly, only half the companies I surveyed use a maintenance skill test as part of the selection process.

Aside from skills tests, 75 percent are currently doing drug testing, 100 percent are doing a criminal background check, 40 percent are using a BTI (behavior type indicator) and 70 percent are doing credit checks.

Elsa Pereira with the PRC Group in New Jersey said that the credit and criminal background checks are the ones that typically cause them to pass on a candidate. Be consistent in applying the company policies regarding drugs, criminal history and credit, even if it becomes frustrating.

There are many companies that offer tests such as credit, criminal and drug testing. Price them and make sure they will provide a good return on investment. Criminal checks can be tricky as far as the jurisdictions that are checked, so first determine the scope of the check.

**Conduct Multiple Interviews:** Use multiple interviews. Get the service team involved in the interviewing process. Have the maintenance team meet with good candidates to determine skills. Have them go to the shop and ask the candidates to identify the use of various tools, identify parts and use and repair procedures for those parts.

Every company I surveyed conducts two interviews with viable candidates. Some use multi-site managers to conduct the 2nd interview while others use the maintenance team. There is no magic formula as long as the maintenance team is involved in some way.

*\*Continued in next month's newsletter...*

## Rents Drop in County and Other Parts of the West

*\*\*\*The Associated Press, reprinted with tanks from <http://news.bellinghamherald.com>*

Renting an apartment remained a relative bargain in most Western markets during 2004 as weak tenant demand continued to handcuff landlords, according to a survey released this week.

The average apartment rent either declined or rose by less than 3 percent in 15 of the 20 major metropolitan areas surveyed by RealFacts, a Novato, California based real estate research firm.

The survey didn't include markets as small as the Bellingham metropolitan area, but rents have declined here too, according to some measures. Statistics available on the Web site of the National Low Income Housing Coalition show the median rent for a one-bedroom apartment in this area was \$552 in 2004, down from \$562 in 2003. A two-bedroom rental showed a median monthly rent of \$693 in 2004, down from \$747 in 2003.

Some real estate agents say market forces are holding down local rents because of the increased supply of single-family homes for rent. The rental glut is fueled by first-time investors buying homes and renting them out at comparatively low rates in anticipation of profits on a resale in a rising housing market.

Rent fluctuations in most Western markets lagged behind last year's 3.3 percent increase in a broader consumer price index tracked by the federal government.

The only places where apartment rents outpaced the government's consumer price index were in Southern California, Nevada and the Fresno, Calif., metropolitan area, where average rent increases ranged from just under 4 percent to nearly 7 percent.

"The feeling you get is that everything is in a 'wait-and-see' position," said Caroline Latham, RealFacts' chief executive. "There really isn't anything to complain about or anything to cheer about."

*\*\*\*Bellingham Herald reporter John Stark contributed to this report. Published from Northwest Rental Owners Association.*

## FREE WHALES - from the desk of the bookkeeper

Cindy wants to thank all of you that pay in a timely manner. As a thank you she is giving away three 15 inch, cute and fuzzy, stuffed ORCA Whales each month! They will go to the first 3 clients that send in their payments. In February we happily sent stuffed whales to: Landmark Property Management - Patricia, Jackie Stone, and Windermere Camano Island!

**Thanks everyone!**



## ORCA WISDOM

Long ago when men cursed and beat the ground with sticks, it was called witchcraft. Today it's called golf.

**\*\*Will Rogers\*\***