



EAA holds another forum on online property advertisements

(15 July 2009) The Estate Agents Authority (EAA) organised another forum on online property advertisements today with the aim of introducing the relevant laws related to online property advertisements and promoting a high level of compliance in the estate agency trade. A similar forum on advertising properties online was held on 4 March.

Attending the forum were about 40 participants from different sectors, including estate agency trade associations, estate agency companies, property-website companies and representatives from media advertising departments.

Participants were briefed on the relevant legal requirements when advertising properties online, the most common types of non-compliant advertisements, and the EAA's compliance-inspection efforts, with a view to reminding them that online advertisements were considered a form of advertising and therefore had to comply with all relevant requirements related to advertising.

Acting Chief Executive Officer of the EAA Mr Anthony Wong, PMSM, said, "Owing to the growing popularity of online property advertising, the EAA has held a second forum on the issue and hopes that through further discussion, the relevant parties will have a better understanding of the legal requirements when advertising property online and join hands with the EAA to promote compliance in the trade".

Mr Wong added that the EAA had reinforced its "cyber patrol" in the first half of the year, with the number of spot checks of online property advertisements reaching 220, far more than the 138 inspections conducted for the whole of 2008. These checks resulted in the EAA's giving verbal advice 32 times. Most types of non-compliance were minor and rectifications were made soon after the EAA had verbally advised the practitioners concerned.

The EAA issued a practice circular entitled "Online Advertising" earlier this month to explain the legal requirements when issuing online advertisements, including (1) signing an estate agency agreement with the



owner prior to advertising the residential property, (2) stating the number of the licence or the statement of particulars of business as well as the business name of the estate agency, (3) ascertaining the accuracy of the photographs exhibited in the advertisements, (4) updating the information in the advertisements from time to time, (5) putting a revision date on each online advertisement so that consumers know how up to date the information is, and (6) removing the advertisements once the property is no longer available for sale or lease.

It was also advised in the circular that practitioners clearly state the terms and conditions of the contract for launching the advertisements when engaging the service of website service providers. In addition, the management of estate agencies should establish proper procedures or systems to supervise and manage its estate agency business to ensure that its staff comply with the above guidelines.

For more effective law enforcement, the EAA will engage closely with the relevant parties, keep a careful watch on online property advertisements and step up enforcement if necessary.



EAA Acting Chief Executive Officer Mr Anthony Wong, PMSM, explains the laws as regards advertising properties online to about 40 attendees of the forum.