



FEMA

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News Release

Survivors Cautioned to Beware of Frauds and Scams

ORLANDO, Fla. – State and federal recovery officials urge Floridians to watch for and report any suspicious activity or potential fraud.

As government agencies and charitable groups continue to provide disaster assistance, con artists, identity thieves and other criminals may attempt to prey on vulnerable survivors. The most common post-disaster fraud practices include phony housing inspectors, fraudulent building contractors, bogus pleas for disaster donations, fake offers of state or federal aid and charging for free services.

Scam attempts can be made over the phone, by mail, by email, through the internet, or in person. Con artists are creative and resourceful. It is important to remain alert, ask questions and require identification when someone claims to represent a government agency. If an offer sounds too good to be true, it should be questioned.

Here are some tips to remember to safeguard against fraud:

- **Ask to see ID badges.** All Federal Emergency Management Agency representatives **always** carry an identification badge with a photograph. A FEMA shirt or jacket is **not** proof of identity. If you are unsure or uncomfortable with anyone you encounter, contact local law enforcement.
- **Keep your FEMA registration number safe.** It is your key to your application information. Do not share it with others.
- **Safeguard personal information.** No state or federal government disaster assistance agency will call you to ask for your financial account information. Unless you place a call to an agency yourself, you should not provide personal information over the phone. It can lead to identity theft. In general, be cautious when giving personal information such as social security or bank account numbers to anyone. FEMA will only request an applicant's bank account numbers during the initial registration process. FEMA inspectors will require verification of identity but will already have your registration number.

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- **Beware of people going door to door.** People knocking on doors at damaged homes or phoning homeowners claiming to be building contractors could be con artists, especially if they ask for personal information or solicit money.
- **Know that federal workers do not solicit or accept money.** FEMA and Small Business Administration staff **never** charge applicants for disaster assistance, inspections, or to help fill out applications. FEMA inspectors verify damages, but **do not** involve themselves in any aspect of the repair nor recommend any contractor.

Those who suspect fraud may call the FEMA Disaster Fraud Hotline at **866-720-5721** (toll free). Complaints may also be made to local law enforcement agencies.

The quickest way to apply for federal assistance is online at www.disasterassistance.gov. Survivors may also apply by phone at 800-621-3362 (Voice, 711 or VS) or 800-462-7585 (TTY). Due to high demand, lines may be busy. Please be patient, and try calling in the morning or evening when call volume may be lower. The FEMA helpline numbers 800-621-3362 (Voice, 711 or VS) or 800-462-7585 (TTY) are open from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. (ET), seven days a week until further notice.

For more recovery information, visit www.FEMA.gov/IrmaFL, or follow us [@FEMARegion4](https://twitter.com/FEMARegion4) on [Twitter](#) and on [FEMA's Facebook page](#).

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FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-FEMA (3362). For TTY call 800-462-7585.

FEMA's temporary housing assistance and grants for public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan. However, applicants who receive SBA loan applications must submit them to SBA to be eligible for assistance that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses.

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