

Survivors Beware! Fraud, Scams Flourish After Disasters

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BROOKLYN, N.Y. — After a disaster, scam artists, identity thieves and other criminals often attempt to take advantage of disaster survivors. Federal and state emergency management officials urge residents to watch for and report any suspicious activity.

When a disaster strikes, unscrupulous people may try to take advantage of survivors by posing as official disaster-aid workers or even as relatives trying to help survivors complete their applications.

Common post-disaster fraud practices include:

Fake offers of state or federal aid: Federal and state workers do not solicit or accept money. FEMA and U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) personnel never charge applicants for disaster assistance, inspections or help in completing applications.

Phony housing inspectors: When a disaster occurs, applicants may be vulnerable to phony housing inspectors claiming to represent FEMA to inspect damage. Ask to see the inspector's identification badge. All FEMA personnel and contractors will have official laminated photo identification. Housing inspectors have each applicant's nine-digit registration number. **Field inspectors may use different types of communication methods to contact applicants. Inspectors may be calling from issued phones or personal cell phones, so applicants may receive calls from different area codes. Inspectors do not request money to complete an inspection.** They can use phone calls, text messages, and emails. **Inspectors can and will use any contact information the applicant provided in their application.**

There may be occasions when a FEMA representative must contact you to verify personal data. You should request a FEMA identification number (or FEMA registration number) from the caller. If you are unsure of the caller's identification



or you are suspicious of someone who says they're a housing inspector sent by FEMA, call the FEMA Hotline at **800-621-3362 (TTY 800-462-7585)** from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Central Time.

Phony government workers: You may be contacted by scam artists posing as disaster workers who are seeking money for services. Federal, state, and local disaster workers do not solicit or accept money. Nor will federal disaster employees promise a disaster grant.

Fraudulent charitable solicitations: A list of reputable charities that are approved by the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance is available at [Give.Org](https://www.give.org). Criminals exploit survivors by sending fraudulent communications through email or social media and by creating phony websites designed to solicit contributions.

The Alliance advises, "do not respond to unsolicited emails, watch out for pushy telemarketers and look out for fake charities that sound real by using similar names." For more information about avoiding charitable giving scams, visit the [Federal Trade Commission's website](https://www.ftc.gov).

Rental listing scams: The Federal Trade Commission has information on how rental-listing scams work. For instance, scammers know that finding the right apartment or vacation rental can be hard work, and a seemingly good deal is hard to pass up. [Learn more](#)

Beware of unlicensed/uninsured contractors/phony contractors: Often after a disaster, individuals will represent themselves as legitimate contractors. Ask for references, be cautious about advanced payments, make sure they are licensed and obtain the proper permits.

If you have knowledge of fraud, waste, or abuse, you can report these tips - 24 hours a day, seven days a week - to the FEMA Disaster Fraud Hotline at **866-720-5721** or email disaster@leo.gov.

If you believe you or a loved one has become a victim of a scam or identity theft, report it immediately to your local police or sheriff's department, or contact the office of the **New York Attorney General**:

- Consumer Protection Hotline, **800-697-1220**



FEMA

- [Division of Consumer Protection](#)
- [File a Consumer Complaint](#)

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FEMA's mission is helping people before, during, and after disasters.

For referrals to agencies that support community specific need, contact your nearest 211 counts center at <https://www.211nys.org/contact-us>. In NYC call 311 for outlying area, call 211.

For official information on the recovery effort following the hurricane, please visit <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4615>. Follow us on twitter at twitter.com/femaregion2 and www.facebook.com/fema.

