Be Alert to Fraud After a Disaster

Release Date: 1? 13, 2022

LACEY, WA. – After a disaster, con artists and criminals may try to obtain money or steal personal information through fraud or identity theft. In some cases, thieves try to apply for FEMA assistance using names, addresses and Social Security numbers they have stolen from survivors.

Residents of Clallam, Skagit and Whatcom counties and members of the Lummi Nation, Nooksack Indian Tribe or the Quileute Tribe who were affected by the Nov. 13-15, 2021 floods and mudslides should be alert to potential fraud as they recover from the disaster.

If a FEMA Inspector comes to your home and you did not submit a FEMA application, your information may have been used without your knowledge to create a FEMA application. If so, please inform the inspector that you did not apply for FEMA assistance so they can submit a request to stop further processing of the application.

If you did not apply for assistance but receive a letter from FEMA, please call the FEMA Helpline at 800-621-3362. The helpline will submit a request to stop any further processing of that application.

If you do want to apply for FEMA assistance after stopping an application made in your name without your knowledge, the Helpline will assist you in creating a new application.

Scams

FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance teams, housing inspectors and other officials will be working in areas impacted by the storms. FEMA and the U.S. Small Business Administration representatives never charge applicants for disaster assistance, inspections or help in filling out applications.

Don’t believe anyone who promises a disaster grant in return for payment.

Be wary of unexpected phone calls or visits to your home from people claiming to be FEMA housing inspectors or people claiming they work for FEMA. FEMA representatives will have a photo-ID badge and your FEMA application number.

Don’t give your banking information to a person claiming to be a FEMA housing inspector. FEMA inspectors are never authorized to collect your personal financial information.

If you believe you are the victim of a scam, report it immediately to your local law enforcement authorities.

If you suspect fraudulent activity involving FEMA, you can report it to the FEMA Fraud Branch at: StopFEMAFraud@fema.dhs.gov, fax: (202) 212-4926 or write to: FEMA Fraud and Internal Investigation Division, 400 C Street SW Mail Stop 3005, Washington, DC 20472-3005.

If you suspect identity theft, please visit Identity Theft | FTC Consumer Information or IdentityTheft.gov.

For an accessible video on fraud after a disaster, go to youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=EVqS709Gj_U&feature=youtu.be.

For more information about Washington flood recovery, visit fema.gov/disaster/4635. Follow the FEMA Region 10 Twitter account at twitter.com/femaregion10.

###

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