

Texans Should Beware of Fraud, Scams Following Tropical Storm Imelda

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AUSTIN, Texas – State and federal disaster recovery officials urge Texans affected by Tropical Storm Imelda to watch for and report any suspicious activity or potential fraud.

As government agencies and charitable groups continue providing disaster assistance to Texans affected by the recent tropical storm, scam 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 and fake offers of state or federal aid.

Local, state and federal government officials advise all residents that no individual with a government disaster assistance agency will call or text asking for financial account information.

Survivors also should keep in mind that federal workers never ask for or accept money and always carry identification badges. There is no fee required to apply for or to get disaster assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency or the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Scam attempts can be made over the phone, by mail or email, text or in person. Unfortunately, there seems to be no limit to the inventiveness of those wanting to commit fraud. Residents are asked to remain alert, ask questions and require



photo identification when someone claims to represent a government agency.

Those who question the validity of a contact or suspect fraud are encouraged to call the tollfree FEMA Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721. Complaints also may be made by contacting local law enforcement agencies.

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FEMA's mission: Helping people before, during and after disasters.

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) is the federal government's primary source of money for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged private property. SBA helps businesses of all sizes, private non-profit organizations, homeowners and renters fund repairs or rebuilding efforts and cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged personal property. These disaster loans cover losses not fully compensated by insurance or other recoveries and do not duplicate benefits of other agencies or organizations. For more information, applicants may contact SBA's Disaster Assistance Customer Service Center by calling 800-659-2955, emailing disastercustomerservice@sba.gov, or visiting SBA's website at [SBA.gov/disaster](https://www.sba.gov/disaster). Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals may call 800-877-8339.



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