

Filing False FEMA Applications May Lead to Criminal Charges

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LANSING, Mich. – If you apply for FEMA Assistance and purposely claim disaster damage that never happened, you may be charged with a serious crime.

FEMA must make sure taxpayer dollars go only to Michigan homeowners and renters in Eaton, Ingham, Ionia, Kent, Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland and Wayne counties who suffered genuine loss caused by the Aug. 24-26, 2023, severe storms, tornadoes and flooding. The agency takes payment of funds to the true survivors very seriously.

Those who are caught filing a false application for FEMA assistance can be charged with a felony and, if convicted, face a maximum 30-year prison term and up to \$250,000 in fines.

Any applicant who has made a mistake when reporting damage or has misrepresented losses may correct or cancel their claim. Individuals need to call the FEMA Helpline at 800-621-3362 to withdraw or correct an application and prevent prosecution. The helpline accepts calls seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. If you use a relay service such as video relay service (VRS), captioned telephone service or others, give FEMA the number for that service.

If you know of someone who is filing a fraudulent application, report this or other instances of fraud, waste or abuse.

You may contact the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General (OIG) at 800-323-8603.

You also may fill out a fraud complaint online at the OIG's website (www.oig.dhs.gov) or mail to: DHS Office of Inspector General: Mail Stop 0305; Department of Homeland Security; 245 Murray Drive SW; Washington DC 20528-0305, and mark it for the attention of the Office of Investigations – Hotline.



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You also may call FEMA's Office of the Chief Security Officer (OCSO) Tip line at 866-223-0814 or email to FEMA-OCSO-Tipline@fema.dhs.gov.

Your call may be answered by a recorded message. You will be asked a few questions. The information will be entered into the data system and given to a field investigator. If you leave a name and phone number, it will be the investigator who will call back, not the person who took your call. An inspector has 90 days to confirm the complaint.

Conducting audits and investigating possible fraudulent activities is done in all federal disaster operations. The U.S. Department of Justice prosecutes cases that result in criminal charges.

The deadline to apply with FEMA and the U.S. Small Business Administration is Wednesday, **May 8, 2024**.

To apply, visit DisasterAssistance.gov, download the [FEMA App](#) or call the FEMA Helpline at **800-621-3362** between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. Multilingual operators are available. If you use a relay service such as video relay service (VRS), captioned telephone service or others, give FEMA your number for that service when you apply.

To apply in person, visit any Disaster Recovery Center. For locations and hours, go online to fema.gov/drc.

For more information about the disaster recovery operation in Michigan, visit www.fema.gov/disaster/4757.

