

Ensuring Disaster Aid Goes to Where it is Needed: Tips for Donors and Survivors

DENVER – Following a disaster there is a natural desire to want to help those in need. For those that have gone through a disaster, it is a stressful time and it can be difficult to know where to turn for aid. Here are some tips for those that would like to give of their time or money to support disaster relief efforts, as well as for those who suffered losses during the Boulder County fire and windstorm and are in need of assistance.

Receiving Help

While navigating your personal recovery after the Marshall Fire and straight-line wind events, it is important to be aware of scams that may exist targeting disaster survivors. Scam attempts can be made in person, over the phone, by mail or by email, or by text messages. Be wary of unsolicited offers to help that request payment in return, including a charitable donation.

Always request identification if someone you don't know is making offers of potential assistance. Local, state and federal officials never request money for their recovery services and always carry identification badges. There is never a fee required to apply for or receive help from FEMA, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) or state and local governments. Likewise, confirm volunteers offering assistance are who they claim to be. Legitimate charitable groups will provide identification and will not ask for money for their services.

If you believe you are the victim of an **insurance** scam, report it immediately to local law enforcement or contact the Colorado Division of Insurance Consumer Services Team at (303) 804-7490 / (800) 930-3745, To file a fraud complaint, email DORA.Insurance@state.co.us. **For other scams** connect with the Colorado Attorney General's Office at <https://stopfraudcolorado.gov/> or call 800-222-4444.

If you suspect fraudulent activity involving FEMA, you can report it to the FEMA Fraud Branch at StopFEMAFraud@fema.dhs.gov, by fax: (202) 212-4926, or write



FEMA

to: FEMA Fraud and Internal Investigation Division, 400 C Street SW Mail Stop 3005, Washington, DC 20472-3005.

If you suspect identity theft, go to www.identitytheft.gov.

Giving Help

Many people want to help community members affected by disasters through monetary donations, physical donations, and volunteerism. It is important for individuals looking to offer support to conduct research to ensure the organization or entity they are giving to is legitimate.

A list of reputable charities that are approved by the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance is available at www.give.org. The Alliance advises "not responding to unsolicited emails, watching out for pushy telemarketers and looking out for fake charities that sound real by using similar names." The State of Colorado and Colorado Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters has vetted a list of organizations providing support to Marshall Fire survivors. Find the list on their website at <https://www.coloradoresponds.org/donate-to-an-agency.html>.

Boulder County has established a platform for people looking to donate materials: <https://dart-co.communityos.org/>

For more information about avoiding charitable giving scams, visit the Federal Trade Commission's website at <http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/scam-alerts>.

