

Protect Your Identity. Be Alert to Fraud and Scams.

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BRISTOL, Va.— After a natural disaster, it is important to protect yourself against fraud and identity theft. In some cases, criminals may try to get information by pretending to be disaster workers. Scam artists may try to apply for FEMA assistance using names, addresses and Social Security numbers they have stolen from people affected by the disaster.

Protect your identity and **stay informed** by doing these easy things:

- Federal and local disaster workers do not solicit or accept money. Don't trust anyone who offers financial help and then asks for money.
- Do not disclose information to any unsolicited telephone calls and e-mails from individuals claiming to be FEMA or federal employees. FEMA will only contact you if you have called FEMA first or registered for assistance. If you receive suspicious emails or phone calls, you can call the FEMA Helpline at **1-800-621-3362** to verify if a FEMA call or email is legitimate.
- Always ask to see I.D. FEMA personnel will always have an official identification badge. A FEMA shirt or jacket is not proof of identity.



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- Do not offer any personal information, including your Social Security number and bank information, unless you are speaking with a verified FEMA representative.
- Be on alert if someone asks for your 9-digit registration ID, which you receive when you apply for disaster assistance through FEMA.
- Stay tuned to trusted local media for updates from local officials on disaster fraud and scams.
- After you apply for FEMA assistance, a home inspection may be necessary. FEMA inspectors will make an appointment before coming to your house. They may verify your identity using the last four digits of the 9-digit registration number but will not ask for all nine numbers. FEMA inspectors will also not ask you for your Social Security number.
- FEMA does not hire or endorse specific contractors to fix homes or recommend repairs. A FEMA inspector's job is to verify damage.

To report scams, fraud, and identity-theft contact:

- Toll-free Disaster Fraud Hotline at **1-866-720-5721**
- The Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud:
justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form
- When in doubt, report any suspicious behavior to your local authorities.

Residents of **Giles, Grayson, Montgomery, Pulaski, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington**, and **Wythe** counties and the city of **Galax** are eligible to apply for



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assistance from FEMA to help with costs from damage and losses caused by Tropical Storm Helene.

You can register for FEMA assistance by visiting disasterassistance.gov, using the [FEMA mobile app](#), or by calling **1-800-621-3362**.

FEMA has set up a rumor response webpage to clarify our role in the Helene response. Visit [Hurricane Helene: Rumor Response | FEMA.gov](#).

For more information on Virginia's disaster recovery, visit vaemergency.gov, the [Virginia Department of Emergency Management Facebook page](#), fema.gov/disaster/4831 and facebook.com/FEMA.

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FEMA's mission is helping people before, during, and after disasters. FEMA Region 3's jurisdiction includes Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia. Follow us on X at x.com/FEMAreion3 and on LinkedIn at linkedin.com/company/femareion3.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency, or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 833-285-7448. If you use a relay service, such as video relay service (VRS), captioned telephone service or others, give FEMA the number for that service. Multilingual operators are available (press 2 for Spanish and 3 for other languages).



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