

Disaster Fraud: Filing False FEMA Claims Costly to Deserving Survivors

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ORLANDO, Fla. – Those who intentionally claim false losses with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are taking money away from those who truly need assistance and stand in danger of being charged with a felony.

FEMA must ensure that taxpayer dollars go only to people who incurred legitimate losses and the agency takes disbursement of necessary funds to the proper parties very seriously.

Those who are caught trying to make fraudulent claims can be charged with a felony and, if convicted, face a maximum 30-year prison term and up to \$250,000 in fines.

If you know of someone who is filing false damage claims with FEMA, you should report this or other instances of fraud, waste or abuse:

- Contact the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General (OIG) at **800-323-8603, TTY 844-889-4357.**
- A fraud complaint may also be completed online at the OIG's website (www.oig.dhs.gov), faxed to **202-254-4297** or mailed to: DHS Office of Inspector General: Mail Stop 0305; Department of Homeland Security; 245 Murray Drive SW; Washington DC 20528-0305.
- Survivors can also 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.

Calls may be answered by a recorded message. The caller will be asked a few questions. The information will be entered into the data system and assigned to a field investigator. If the caller left a name and phone number, it will be the



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investigator who will call back, not the person who took the call. An inspector has 90 days to verify the complaint.

Special agents from the Office of Inspector General use a number of methods to detect fraud. An automated system cross-checks information with other agencies and insurance companies to weed out duplicate applications. Field inspections are conducted to verify losses and damages for every person who applies to FEMA for individual assistance. Potential cases of fraud or misuse are referred for prosecution as federal offenses.

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

Any applicant who has made a mistake when reporting damage has the opportunity to correct or cancel their claim. Individuals need to call the FEMA Helpline (**800-621-3362**) for **voice** or **711 VRS**, or **800-662-7585** for **TTY** to withdraw or correct an application.

For more recovery information, visit www.FEMA.gov/IrmaFL, or follow us [@FEMARegion4 on Twitter](https://twitter.com/FEMARegion4) and on [FEMA's Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/FEMA).

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FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

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 800-621-FEMA (3362). For TTY call 800-462-7585.

FEMA's temporary housing assistance and grants for public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan. However, applicants who receive SBA loan applications must submit them to SBA to be eligible for assistance that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses.



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