

Vermonters Encouraged to Beware of Fraud and Scams

Release Date: August 22, 2024

When natural disasters occur, it's common for some people to try and exploit the situation by pretending to be official disaster aid workers.

FEMA encourages survivors to be aware of fraud and scams. FEMA also encourages survivors to report any suspicious activity or potential fraud from scam artists, identity thieves and other criminals.

Survivors should also be aware that this kind of situation doesn't happen only at the beginning of the response to the disaster when people might be more vulnerable. It can happen any time. It's important to know that FEMA does not endorse any specific commercial businesses, products or services.

FEMA encourages survivors and business owners to be vigilant for these common post-disaster fraud practices:

FEMA Housing inspectors

- Be cautious if somebody asks for your nine-digit registration number. A FEMA inspector will never ask for this information. They already have it in their records.
- Ask the person to show you their identification badge. Federal employees always wear an official government badge to identify themselves.

Fake offers of local or federal aid

- Don't trust someone who asks for money. Federal and local disaster workers do not ask for nor accept money. FEMA and U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) staff never charge applicants for disaster assistance, inspections or help in filling out applications.
- Don't believe anyone who promises a disaster grant and asks for large cash deposits or advance payments in full.



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Fraudulent building contractors

- Use licensed or verified local contractors backed by reliable references.
- To find licensed certified contractors check the Vermont Office of Attorney General Consumer Assistance Program at ago.vermont.gov/cap.
- Don't pay more than half the costs of repairs in advance.
- Demand that contractors detail the job to be done with guarantees in writing.

If you suspect fraud, call the FEMA Disaster Fraud Hotline at **1-866-720-5721**.

If you suspect identity theft, visit the Federal Trade Commission's website at identitytheft.gov.



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