

Wildfire Survivors: Beware of Stolen Identity Fraud and Other Disaster Recovery Scams and Deceptions

Release Date: January 18, 2025

LOS ANGELES – Some Californians impacted by the Los Angeles County wildfires may be targeted with scams and fraudulent schemes. Disasters are often opportunities for criminals who attempt to obtain names, addresses and social security numbers to fraudulently gain access to a survivor’s legitimate FEMA grants.

It is important to note that only one application may be filed for each household. A survivor who is applying with FEMA and is told they already have applied should first ensure no one else in the household has already applied on their behalf. If you suspect fraud, call the **FEMA Helpline** immediately at **800-621-3362** or speak to a FEMA representative at a Disaster Recovery Center. FEMA’s security team will promptly investigate the duplication and stop further processing of that application. FEMA staff will be able to assist the survivor and ensure they receive the assistance they qualify for.

If you did not apply for assistance but received a letter from FEMA about your application, call the **FEMA Helpline** at **800-621-3362** to stop further processing of the application and investigate the apparent fraud.

Visit IdentityTheft.gov for more information and steps you can take if you suspect you're the victim of identity theft.

California law price-gouging protections are in effect and apply to hotels, rental housing, food, and many other goods and services. If you think you are the victim of price gouging, disaster-related scams, or other misconduct visit <https://oag.ca.gov/LAFires> to file a report.

Other Frauds and Scams



FEMA

Page 1 of 3

Disaster survivors need to be aware that con artists and criminals may continue their mischief throughout the disaster recovery period. Here are a few cons to watch out for:

FEMA Impersonators. Federal and local disaster workers do not solicit or accept money. Don't believe anyone who promises a disaster grant in return for payment. Do not disclose personal information to individuals claiming to be FEMA or federal employees via unsolicited calls or emails. FEMA will not contact you unless you have called FEMA first or applied for assistance. Ask to see ID badges. All FEMA representatives carry an identification badge with a photograph. A FEMA shirt or jacket is not proof of identity. Scam artists may also pose as government officials, aid workers or insurance company employees.

Be wary of unexpected phone calls or visits to your home from people claiming to be FEMA housing inspectors or saying they work for FEMA. FEMA representatives will have a laminated badge and your nine-digit FEMA registration number. Inspectors never charge a fee to inspect your property.

Phony Professionals. FEMA does not hire or endorse specific contractors to fix homes or recommend repairs. A FEMA housing inspector's only job is to verify damage. When in doubt, report any suspicious behavior to your local authorities.

Phony Charities. Unscrupulous people may attempt to solicit assistance for disaster survivors by phone, email, letter or face-to-face. Ask for their charity's name, address, phone number and website. Then, call the charity to confirm that the person asking for funds is an actual employee or volunteer.

The deadline to apply for FEMA assistance is **March 10, 2025**. To apply: visit DisasterAssistance.gov, call the FEMA Helpline at **800-621-3362**, or apply in person at a Disaster Recovery Center (DRC). To find a DRC near you, go to FEMA.gov/drc.

For the latest information about California's recovery, visit fema.gov/disaster/4856. Follow FEMA Region 9 [@FEMARegion9](https://twitter.com/FEMARegion9) on X or follow FEMA on social media at: [FEMA Blog](https://fema.gov/blog) on fema.gov, [@FEMA](https://twitter.com/FEMA) or [@FEMAEspanol](https://twitter.com/FEMAEspanol) on X, [FEMA](https://www.facebook.com/FEMA) or [FEMA Espanol](https://www.facebook.com/FEMAEspanol) on Facebook, [@FEMA](https://www.instagram.com/FEMA) on Instagram, and via [FEMA YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFEMA). Also, follow Administrator Deanne Criswell on Twitter [@FEMA_Deanne](https://twitter.com/FEMA_Deanne).



FEMA

Page 2 of 3

California is committed to supporting residents impacted by the Los Angeles Hurricane-Force Firestorm as they navigate the recovery process. Visit [CA.gov/LAFires](https://www.ca.gov/LAFires) for up-to-date information on disaster recovery programs, important deadlines, and how to apply for assistance.



FEMA