

Hurricane Survivors Warned to Be Aware of Fraud and Scam Artists

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ST. CROIX, Virgin Islands – The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) remind hurricane survivors that scam artists could be at work in the U.S. Virgin Islands, targeting survivors of hurricanes Irma and Maria.

Here are a few guidelines to protect yourself, or someone you care about, from disaster fraud:

- FEMA and other federal workers do not ask for, or accept, money. They will never charge applicants for disaster assistance, home inspections, or help filling out applications. Stay alert for false promises to speed up the insurance, disaster assistance, or building permit process – and do not give anyone money for such assistance.
- If someone approaches you and says they are representing the Emergency Home Repairs VI program, ask to see identification. The Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority (VIHFA), which administers the Emergency Home Repairs VI program, assigns inspections of homes after survivors register with the program. These inspectors will identify themselves by showing their Emergency Home Repairs VI Badge with the VIHFA logo, inspector name and photo. The case managers from Emergency Home Repairs VI program will schedule an appointment time for the inspection. Inspectors will not show up to the residence unless the case manager has called to confirm the appointment with the homeowner.
- If you have a question about your inspection, call Emergency Home Repairs VI at 844-813-9191.
- VIHFA inspectors will not ask for money. The repairs are paid through FEMA's Public Assistance program. They will already have your registration information.
- If you are approached via phone, email or in person by someone claiming to represent a charity helping disaster survivors, ask for the charity's exact name, street address, phone number, and web address, then contact the charity



directly and confirm that the person asking for funds is an employee or volunteer. Always take steps to ensure the charity is legitimate before you give money, and request a receipt with the charity's name, street address, phone number and web address (if applicable). Legitimate nonprofit agencies routinely provide receipts for tax purposes.

- If you are unsure or uncomfortable with anyone you encounter claiming to be an emergency management official or charity worker, do not give out personal information, and report the incident.
- If you suspect fraud, contact the National Center for Disaster Fraud's hotline at **866-720-5721** or email the organization at disaster@leo.gov. Learn more about the National Center for Disaster Fraud at www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud.
- You may also report any suspicious activity to any one of the Virgin Islands police departments.

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*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 **800-621-3362** (voice, **711/VRS** - Video Relay Service) (TTY: **800-462-7585**). Multilingual operators are available (press 2 for Spanish).*

FEMA's mission is helping people before, during, and after a disaster.

For official information on the recovery effort following the hurricanes, please visit www.informusvi.com or www.usviupdate.com. Follow us on social media at twitter.com/femaregion2 and www.facebook.com/FEMAUSVirginIslands.

*To donate or volunteer, contact the voluntary or charitable organization of your choice through the National Voluntary Agencies Active in Disasters (NVOAD) at www.nvoad.org. For those who wish to help, **cash** donations offer voluntary agencies the most flexibility in obtaining the most-needed resources and pumps money into the local economy to help businesses recover. The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands also has the "Fund for the Virgin Islands" at www.USVIrecovery.org.*



FEMA

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