

Be Aware of Scammers Pretending to be Disaster Workers

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Scam artists, identity thieves and other criminals are already descending on survivors of the storms and flooding that hit Middle Tennessee on Aug. 21. Federal and Tennessee emergency management officials urge residents to watch for and report any suspicious activity.

Many unscrupulous people and scam artists take advantage of survivors by posing as FEMA representatives, housing inspectors or other official disaster aid workers. Many tell survivors that they are “just trying to help” survivors complete their applications, but they are trying to obtain personal identify information. Others claim to be contractors only to make promises they don’t keep while pocketing a survivor’s money.

Survivors should keep the following information in mind while FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance teams, housing inspectors and other officials are on the ground.

- Don’t trust anyone who asks for money. Federal and local disaster workers do not ask for or accept money. FEMA and U.S. Small Business Administration representatives never charge applicants for disaster assistance, inspections or help in filling out applications.
- Don’t believe anyone who promises a disaster grant in return for a large cash deposit or other payments in full.
- Be wary of unexpected phone calls or visits to your home from people claiming to be FEMA housing inspectors or people claiming they work for FEMA. The person might ask for your Social Security number and income or banking information. FEMA representatives will have a laminated badge and your FEMA registration number.
- Protect the privacy of your nine-digit FEMA case/registration number. Legitimate FEMA housing inspectors will NOT ask for this information.



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- Don't give your banking information to a person claiming to be a FEMA housing inspector. FEMA inspectors are never authorized to collect your personal financial information.

Fraudulent building contractors

- Use licensed or verified local contractors with reliable references.
- To find licensed, certified Tennessee contractors, check the [Department of Commerce & Insurance Administration License Roster Search \(tn.gov\)](https://www.tn.gov/department-of-commerce-and-insurance/licenses-and-permits/license-roster-search).
- Don't pay more than half the costs of repairs in advance.
- Demand that contractors detail the job you expect them to do and ask them to give you a written estimate.

Report the Scam. Reporting helps protect others. Based on the type of scam you may see, contact the appropriate agency.

- If you believe you or a loved one has become a victim of a scam or identity theft, report it immediately to your local police or sheriff's department, or contact the office of the Tennessee Attorney General.
- If you suspect fraudulent activity involving FEMA, you can report it to the FEMA Fraud Branch at: Email: StopFEMAFraud@fema.dhs.gov, Fax: (202) 212-4926 or write to:
FEMA Fraud and Internal Investigation Division
400 C Street SW Mail Stop 3005
Washington, DC 20472-3005
- If someone is using your personal information to open new accounts, make a purchase or get a tax refund, report it at [IdentityTheft.gov](https://www.identitytheft.gov).
- You can file a complaint with the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs if you have been scammed or have a dispute with a business regarding a transaction.
- Reporting to the [Better Business Bureau Scam Tracker](https://www.bbb.org/scam-tracker) can help others become aware of scams in your local area.

For more information on Tennessee's disaster recovery, visit www.tn.gov/tema.html and www.fema.gov/disaster/4609. You may also follow FEMA on www.facebook.com/fema and Twitter [@FEMARegion4](https://twitter.com/FEMARegion4).



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