

Protect Yourself from Fraud and Identity Theft

Helena, Mont.— Residents of Carbon, Park, Yellowstone and Stillwater counties who were affected by June's severe flooding should be aware of con artists that may try to obtain money or steal personal information through fraud or identity theft after a disaster.

In Montana, scammers are attempting to take over FEMA accounts by calling applicants and collecting personally identifying information. They use identity data to change banking information on file in an attempt to divert FEMA disaster assistance money to fraudulent bank accounts or mailing addresses.

FEMA and Montana Disaster and Emergency Services caution survivors of Montana's severe storms and flooding event to watch out for these and similar potential scams targeting their identity.

Here are some things to keep in mind to protect yourself from identity theft:

- FEMA representatives will **ALWAYS** have a photo-ID badge and your FEMA application number. Be alert if someone asks for your registration or case number or does not display official badging.
 - During home inspections or phone calls with someone claiming to be a FEMA representative, always ask them to confirm your application number. Call the FEMA Helpline if they cannot provide you with the correct number.
- Government disaster assistance officials will **NEVER** call you to ask for your financial account information. If you suspect fraud, that you have been hacked or fraudulent activity, we strongly recommend you elect to receive any FEMA award by check.
- Housing inspectors, U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), and Disaster Survivor Assistance (DSA) team members **NEVER** charge a fee to inspect your property or provide assistance. Do not trust anyone who offers financial assistance and then asks for money or personal information.



If you believe you are the victim of a scam or are being targeted by scammers here are some steps to follow:

- If you have witnessed a potential scam or believe you are a victim of a potential scam, report it **immediately** to:
 - Your local law enforcement authorities;
 - The Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General's hotline at 1-800-323-8603; or
 - Montana Disaster & Emergency Services at (406) 324-4777.
- If you suspect fraudulent activity involving FEMA, you can report it to the FEMA Fraud Branch at:
 - 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 you suspect identity theft, please visit www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/identity-theft or IdentityTheft.gov.

For an accessible video on fraud after a disaster, go to youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=EVqS709Gj_U&feature=youtu.be.

For more information about FEMA's support to Montana's flooding and severe storms recovery, visit <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4655>. Follow the FEMA Region 8 Twitter account at <https://twitter.com/femaregion8>.

