

FEMA and State Officials on the Lookout for Fraud

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Federal and state disaster officials have recently become aware of scam artists calling Rhode Islanders affected by the September 10-13, 2023 storms and pretending to be FEMA representatives. The con artists will then ask for personal information, such as social security numbers and income and banking information. Giving out this type of information is enough for an unscrupulous person to make a false claim for disaster assistance as well as to commit identity theft.

A FEMA representative who calls an applicant should already have access to personal information to verify. Also, all FEMA representatives wear a photo ID badge. A FEMA shirt is not absolute proof of identity. If you have questions about whether someone is representing FEMA, call the FEMA Helpline at 800-621-3362.

Scam artists may pose as government officials, aid workers, charitable organizations or insurance employees. Never trust anyone who claims to be a disaster assistance employee and asks for money. Local and federal aid workers do not ask for or accept money.

If a FEMA inspector comes to your home and you did not submit an application, your information may have been used to apply without your knowledge. If so, inform the inspector that you did not apply, and they will submit a request to stop further processing of the application.

Anyone who suspects fraud or scams should call the FEMA Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721, TTY call 711. The toll-free number is open 24 hours a day.

FEMA recommends you monitor your credit report for any accounts or changes you do not recognize. If you discover someone is using your information, you will need to take additional steps, including filing a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission through its website: [IdentityTheft.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/identitytheft).



FEMA

When you rebuild, always use licensed and bonded contractors. Ask for credentials before you hire, and never pay for work in advance. FEMA does not have “approved” contractors. Beware of contractors who say they’re affiliated with FEMA: FEMA does not endorse any business, product or service. Don’t sign anything you don’t understand, or contracts with blank spaces.

To file a consumer complaint with the RI Attorney General call 401-274-4400 or go to <https://riag.ri.gov/forms/consumer-complaint>.



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