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News Release

Florida Residents: Beware of Fraud, Scams and Price Gouging

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – State and federal recovery officials encourage Florida residents to watch for and report any suspicious activity or potential fraud from scam artists, identity thieves and other criminals who may try to prey on survivors vulnerable due to the recent hurricanes. They should also be on the lookout for price gouging by gas stations, hotels and other businesses serving disaster survivors in Florida.

FEMA encourages survivors to be especially vigilant for these common post-disaster fraud practices:

- **Fraudulent building contractors**
 - Use only licensed local contractors backed by reliable references.
 - Demand that contractors carry general liability insurance and workers' compensation.
 - Don't pay more than half the costs of repairs upfront.

- **Bogus pleas for post-disaster donations**
 - Verify legitimate solicitations by asking for the charity's exact name, street address, phone number and Web address.
 - Phone the charity and confirm that the person asking for funds is a genuine employee or volunteer.
 - Don't pay donations with cash.
 - Request a receipt with the charity's name, street address, and phone number.

- **Fake offers of state or federal aid**
 - Beware of visits, telephone calls or e-mails — claiming to be from FEMA or the State of Florida — asking for your Social Security number, bank account number or other sensitive information.
 - Avoid scam artists who promise a disaster grant and ask for large cash deposits or advance payments in full.
 - Federal and state workers *never* solicit or accept money or charge applicants for disaster assistance, inspections or help in filling out applications.

Those who question the validity of a contact or suspect fraud are encouraged to call the toll free FEMA Disaster Fraud Hotline at **866-720-5721** or the Florida Attorney General's fraud and price gouging hotline at **866-966-7226**. Complaints also may be made by contacting local law enforcement agencies.

For more information on Florida's disaster recovery visit [fema.gov/disaster/4280](https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4280), twitter.com/FEMA, [facebook.com/FEMA](https://www.facebook.com/FEMA), and [fema.gov/blog](https://www.fema.gov/blog), [floridadisaster.org](https://www.floridadisaster.org) or #FLRecovers. For imagery, video, graphics and releases, see [fema.gov/Hurricane-Matthew](https://www.fema.gov/Hurricane-Matthew).

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FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

*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 or video relay service). TTY users can call **800-462-7585**.*