



FEMA

For Immediate Release:
Monday, October 10, 2016

News Release

Georgia Disaster Survivors: Beware of Fraudulent Disaster Workers or Contractors

ATLANTA – State and federal recovery officials urge Georgia 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 individuals as they recover from Hurricane Matthew.

Georgians whose homes were damaged by Hurricane Matthew may encounter people attempting to cheat them by posing as inspectors, government officials, volunteers or contractors. These people may try to obtain personal information or collect payment for disaster assistance or repairs.

Please keep in mind that Federal Emergency Management Agency employees do not solicit or accept money or ask for personal information from disaster survivors. Many legitimate disaster assistance employees may visit your property such as insurance agents, damage inspectors and Georgia Emergency Management & Homeland Security Agency, FEMA and U.S. Small Business Administration staff.

Here are some tips to remember to safeguard against fraud:

- **Ask to see ID badges.** All FEMA representatives wear a federal photo ID badge. A FEMA shirt or jacket is not proof of identity. If you are unsure or uncomfortable with anyone you encounter, please contact local law enforcement.
- **Safeguard personal information.** GEMHSA and FEMA personnel who are in the field assessing damage will not ask for personal information such as Social Security or bank account numbers. Don't give out credit card or bank information.
- **Beware of people going door-to-door.** People knocking on doors at damaged homes or phoning homeowners claiming to be building contractors could be con artists, especially if they ask for personal information or solicit money.
- **Federal workers do not solicit or accept money.** FEMA staff never charge applicants for disaster assistance, inspections or help to fill out applications.
- **FEMA does not have "approved" contractors.** Beware of contractors who say they are affiliated with FEMA. Don't sign anything you don't understand or contracts with blank spaces.
- **FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance teams** may be in shelters assessing needs and speaking with Red Cross shelter managers. They will always be wearing FEMA shirts and federal photo IDs. Disaster Survivor Assistance teams never ask for or accept payment for their services.
- **When possible, contact government agencies using information posted on their websites or in other official sources.**

Always use licensed and bonded contractors and ask for credentials. Use Georgia contractors if you can. You can verify a Georgia contractor's license online at <http://doas.ga.gov/>. Never pay for anything in advance of work being done. If you have a complaint about anyone soliciting your business, contact <http://www.consumer.ga.gov/>.

If you have knowledge of fraud, waste, abuse or allegations of mismanagement involving disaster relief operations, call the FEMA Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721.

For additional help, contact the Georgia Department of Law's Consumer Protection Unit for more tips on dealing with identify theft and scams at 404-651-8600 or 1-800-869-1123. The line is not active on Monday, Oct. 10, due to the Columbus Day holiday but will be operational again beginning 8:30 a.m., Tuesday, Oct. 11. Normal hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday. Please note that you will be asked to submit your complaint in writing if the issue appears to be one in which we would consider taking action.

For updates on Georgia's Hurricane Matthew response and recovery, Follow @GeorgiaEMA and @femaregion4 on Twitter and visit www.gemhsa.ga.gov and www.fema.gov/matthew.

About GEMHSA

As part of the Office of the Governor, GEMHSA works with local, state and federal governments, in partnership with the private sector and faith-based community, to protect life and property against man-made and natural emergencies. In addition, GEMHSA employees are on 24-hour call statewide to assist local authorities when disaster strikes. GEMHSA's *Ready Georgia* campaign helps Georgians prepare for disasters. Go to www.ready.ga.gov or download the free *Ready Georgia* app for information on developing a custom emergency plan and Ready kit.