



Recovery News

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NEW AND OLD DISASTER SCAMS EMERGE IN BAY STATE

ANDOVER, Mass. – State and federal disaster recovery officials caution Massachusetts residents to be on the alert for an increased number of scam artists using old and new tricks to obtain vital information or take advantage of storm-weary survivors.

The oldest scheme is to pretend to be employed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or other government agencies, such as the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). A FEMA or SBA shirt or jacket is not absolute proof of someone's affiliation with these agencies. All authorized FEMA or SBA personnel display a laminated photo identification card, which they are required to wear at all times.

Imposters may ask for some form of service payment, or bribe, something no FEMA, SBA or federal agency employee should ever do. FEMA-contracted housing inspectors assess damage but do not determine cost estimates. They do not hire or endorse specific contractors to fix homes or recommend repairs.

By posing as FEMA or other state/federal recovery workers, the schemers' goal is often identity theft, either by going door-to-door to damaged homes, or by phone or the internet to obtain personal information such as Social Security and bank account numbers.

Consumers should know that FEMA inspectors never require this information. A Social Security or bank account number will only be requested on the first phone call the applicant makes to **800-621-FEMA (3362)** or (TTY) 800-462-7585 for those with a speech- or hearing-impairment. Online registration at www.DisasterAssistance.gov is also secure. On any follow-up calls, a FEMA representative may ask for the last four digits of your social security number.

In the newest scam, con artists pose as insurance specialists or expeditors able to convince FEMA to increase home repair damage aid or the insurer to pay a larger settlement. The scammers ask the applicant or policyholder to sign a contract giving them a percentage of the "increased" payment. The essence of the con is to take a percentage of the damage grant or policy settlement that would be given anyway. FEMA always deals directly with each applicant and is always willing to consider an appeal by sending a new inspector to review damaged property or claimed losses.

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If you notice suspicious activity in your neighborhood, or suspect someone is trying to commit fraud by coming to your door or contacting you by phone or mail, immediately call your local police department at 911.

Then report it to the State Attorney General's office at [Public Inquiry & Assistance Center Hotline](#) at (617) 727-8400 Monday through Friday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (TTY) users (617) 727-4765. The Elder Hotline can assist citizens over the age of 60 at (888) 243-5337. Internet users can file an "e-complaint" at https://www.eform.ago.state.ma.us/ago_eforms/forms/piac_ecomplaint or you can download a printed copy of the e-complaint form and mail it to:

Office of the Attorney General
Public Inquiry & Assistance Center (PIAC)
One Ashburton Place
Boston, MA 02108

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FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders and 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.