



Disaster News

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BE CAREFUL OF SCAMS AND OTHER FRAUD DURING RECOVERY EFFORTS

OLYMPIA, WA— Residents of Washington State, affected by the severe storm activity of January 6-16, 2009, are urged to be careful of scam and other fraud during recovery efforts. Officials of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Washington Emergency Management Division (WEMD) urge affected residents to exercise caution and diligence.

“We urge people to be careful and vigilant as they recover from this disaster,” said Willie Nunn, FEMA federal coordinating officer in charge of the recovery efforts. “Unfortunately, in these situations, some people prey on others, taking advantage of their misfortunes. We urge people to be especially careful of those requesting personal information, those misrepresenting themselves as FEMA officials, and those asking for money.”

Officials are particularly concerned about rip-off artists pretending to be employed by FEMA or the Small Business Administration (SBA) or other agencies, but who are not. To safeguard against disaster-related fraud, officials recommend the following precautions:

- **Ask for proper identification.** A FEMA or SBA shirt or jacket is not absolute proof of someone's affiliation with an agency. Always ask to see the laminated official photo identification card all federal employees carry. If they don't have it, they are not official representatives. Applicants should also be aware that they may receive visits from more than one official inspector or representative.
- **Under no circumstances are FEMA representative allowed to accept money.** Neither FEMA nor other agency representatives are allowed to accept money. FEMA does not charge for any programs or services. While FEMA inspectors assess damage, the agency does not hire or endorse specific contractors.
- **Safeguard personal information.** If someone requests personal information outside of the official registration process, do not provide it. FEMA inspectors never require this information. Applicants who registered for FEMA assistance, received a registration number, and official FEMA and/or SBA representatives will have that number with them.

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To officially register for FEMA disaster assistance, affected residents can register by calling 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) (TTY 800-462-7585) or online at www.disasterassistance.gov. They will receive a registration number to use with subsequent inquiries or to check the status of their registration.

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FEMA leads and supports the nation in a risk-based, comprehensive emergency management system of preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation to reduce the loss of life and property and protect the nation from all hazards including natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

FEMA's temporary housing assistance and grants for public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan. However, applicants who receive SBA loan applications must submit them to SBA loan officers to be eligible for assistance that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) is the federal government's primary source of money for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged private property. SBA helps homeowners, renters, businesses of all sizes, and private nonprofit organizations fund repairs or rebuilding efforts, and cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged personal property. These disaster loans cover uninsured and uncompensated losses and do not duplicate benefits of other agencies or organizations. For information about SBA programs, applicants may call 1-800-659-2955 (TTY 1-800-877-8339). Homeowners, renters and business owners with questions for the SBA should call the Customer Service Center at 1-800-659-2955 (TTY 1-800-877-8339). Homeowners, renters and business owners with questions for the SBA should call the Customer Service Center at 1-800-659-2955.