



FEMA

Feb. 14, 2017

DR-4300-LA

NR004

News Desk: 225-382-1607

SBA: 916-764-9918

NewsRelease

Beware of Fraud, Scams When Seeking Disaster Assistance

BATON ROUGE, La. — Local, state and federal officials urge survivors of the Feb. 7 Louisiana tornadoes to watch for and immediately report any suspicious activity or potential fraud.

Identity thieves and other criminals may attempt to prey on vulnerable survivors while government agencies and charitable groups begin to provide disaster assistance. The most common post-disaster fraud practices include phony housing inspectors, fraudulent building contractors, bogus pleas for disaster donations and fake offers of state or federal aid.

Local, state and federal officials advise all residents that they never request money for help and always carry identification badges. There is no fee required to apply for or to get help from FEMA, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) or the state.

Scam attempts can be made over the phone, by mail or email, text or in person. Unfortunately, there seems to be no limit to the inventiveness of those wanting to commit fraud. Residents are asked to remain alert, ask questions and require photo identification when someone claims to represent a government agency.

Survivors who have any suspicion of fraud or scams should immediately call the FEMA Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721 or TTY 844-889-4357. Complaints also may be made by contacting a local law enforcement agency or by calling the Louisiana Attorney General's Consumer Protection Hotline at 800-351-4889.

###

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-FEMA (3362). For TTY, call 800-462-7585. If you use 711 or Video Relay Service (VRS), call 800-621-3362.

The U.S. 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 businesses of all sizes, private non-profit organizations, homeowners and renters fund repairs or rebuilding efforts and cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged personal property. These disaster loans cover losses not fully compensated by insurance or other recoveries and do not duplicate benefits of other agencies or organizations. For more information, applicants may contact SBA's Disaster Assistance Customer Service Center by calling 800-659-2955, emailing disastercustomerservice@sba.gov, or visiting SBA's website at SBA.gov/disaster. Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals may call 800-877-8339.