



Key Messages and Talking Points

- Unfortunately, disaster responses often attract scam artists, identity thieves, and other criminals.
- In every disaster, as demonstrated in Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria, and California wildfires, it is important to provide information to the public on how to guard against fraud and report suspicious activity, which FEMA routinely does.
- FEMA recently became aware of some potentially suspicious activity in disaster case files including fraudulent registrations.
- Officials from FEMA, DHS OIG, Department of Treasury and Department of Justice formed a task force to specifically review these fraudulent applications and determine additional actions to take to ensure disaster survivors receive the assistance they need.
- Extensive review of FEMA system security logs found no indications of compromise to the system, however, FEMA and its partners are taking necessary steps to determine the impacts and long-term solutions. In consultation with our partners, FEMA instituted additional identification control measures.
- FEMA instituted additional verification and controls in cases where there was suspicious activity to ensure that only eligible applicants receive assistance.
- FEMA started notifying survivors, by phone or mail, that their applications are receiving additional scrutiny.
- The letters and calls to survivors advise them to contact FEMA to verify their identity through FEMA's helpline 800-621-3362 (FEMA) or by visiting a local Disaster Recovery Center (DRC).
- Survivors who receive letters or calls may still be eligible for disaster assistance.
- FEMA is working with other agencies and disaster partners to ensure survivors who are eligible receive the assistance they need, based on accurate applications and information.
- We are committed to ensuring that all claims for assistance from eligible applicants are reviewed and processed appropriately.
- DHS OIG aggressively investigates allegations of disaster fraud after every federally declared disaster and works with other law enforcement agencies to identify and prosecute individuals who take advantage of programs meant to help those in need.
- While FEMA is working with federal partners to investigate, we do not have an estimate of total impacts at this time, but we are looking at ways to improve our already stringent controls to prevent this type of fraud in the future.
- Survivors should keep watch for, and report, any potential suspicious activity or fraud from scam artists, identity thieves and other criminals.

There are several options for survivors to report suspicious activity or disaster fraud:

- Contact the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) at 1-800-323-8603, TTY 1-844-889-4357.

- Or, a fraud complaint may also be completed online at the OIG's website (<http://www.oig.dhs.gov>); faxed to 202-254-4297 or mailed to: DHS Office of Inspector General: Mail Stop 0305; Department of Homeland Security; 245 Murray Drive SW; Washington DC 20528-0305.
- Survivors can also call FEMA's Office of the Chief Security Officer (OCSO) Tip line at 1-866-223-0814 <mailto:FEMA-OCSO-Tipline@fema.dhs.gov>.
- If survivors suspect suspicious activity or fraud, contact the National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721, fax (225) 334-4707 or email disaster@leo.gov.
- If survivors discover that someone is misusing their information they should file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission through the website: IdentityTheft.gov.