



FEMA Instructs Hurricane Victims To Be Cautious Of Fraud

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) instructs victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to be cautious when applying for individual and housing assistance as fraudulent contractors and scam artists are not uncommon in the wake of disasters. FEMA also reminds individuals that claiming false disaster losses to receive federal assistance is a felony offense, carrying a fine up to \$250,000 and a maximum of 10 years in prison.

"In order for FEMA to help the hundreds of thousands of victims of these major hurricanes, we need them to file for assistance through our programs," said Acting FEMA Director David Paulison. "Disappointingly, there are people who may seek to profit from this tragedy. We have zero tolerance for this behavior and anyone attempting to cheat the system will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

FEMA encourages anyone who believes they may have witnessed fraudulent activity to report it immediately through the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General's Hurricane Relief Fraud Hotline at 1-866-720-5721.

FEMA instructs victims to continue to teleregister through the FEMA helpline 1-800-621-FEMA (TTY 1-800-462-7585) or register at www.fema.gov or visit one of FEMA's Disaster Recovery Centers to ensure they receive the proper disaster assistance and are not victims of fraud.

FEMA prepares the nation for all hazards and manages federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates mitigation activities, trains first responders, works with state and local emergency managers, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration. FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on March 1, 2003.

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