

INTERGOVERNMENTAL ADVISORY #8



FEMA

Joint Field Office
Burlington, VT

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A Reminder to Vermonters — Be Aware of Disaster Fraud

Vermonters are urged to be alert for potential fraud during recovery and rebuilding efforts following Tropical Storm Irene. This protects the identity of the individuals, maintains a lower cost of rebuilding, and ensures the system is not over burdened with fraudulent cases.

Several legitimate persons including, insurance agents, FEMA Community Relations specialist, local inspectors and legitimate contractors, may have reason to visit a storm-damaged property to perform their duties. Survivors could however, encounter people posing as inspectors, government officials or contractors in a bid to obtain personal information or collect payment for repairing work.

The best strategy to protect yourself against fraud is to request to see the individual(s) identification to ensure the safeguard of your personal financial information.

Vermonters are reminded that all FEMA employees and contractors wear a laminated identification photo badge, visible to the public. A FEMA shirt or jacket alone; is not sufficient proof that someone works for the agency. FEMA inspectors may require verification of identity but, will not ask for personal financial information during a home inspection. FEMA and U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) staff **never charge** applicants for disaster assistance, inspections or for help filling out applications. FEMA inspectors verify damage, but do not recommend specific contractors.

FEMA is vigilant for scam artists who seek to take advantage of the disaster survivors by posing as building contractors, inspectors or experts who can help Vermonters get federal or state assistance. FEMA also takes the role as a steward of taxpayer dollars seriously, and actively pursues those who attempt to exploit taxpayers by filing faults disaster claims.

In an effort to bring fraud perpetrators to justice, we need help. Please report any known fraudulent activity, such as, filing false damage claims, or other instances of fraud, waste or abuse to the Vermont's Attorney General's Office; telephone 802-656-3183. In addition, FEMA maintains a disaster fraud hotline at 800-323-8603 for use by anyone wishing to report suspected incidents of fraud. Complaints may be made anonymously or the caller may request confidentiality.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs at the Burlington, VT Joint Field Office (JFO) at **(571) 329.6510** or **(571) 732.5543**.

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 hazard.