



Hunterdon County Sheriff's Office

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Hunterdon County Sheriff Releases Warning To Residents About Disaster Scams

Warns Of Potential Dangers, Offers Tips And Resources To Get Help

After the recent tropical storm caused severe damage to several Hunterdon County communities, Sheriff Fred W. Brown is warning residents to be aware of the potential for scams which can cause additional damage to an already vulnerable disaster-affected group.

Sheriff Brown said, "The Division of Consumer Affairs has issued a warning to all affected persons to be aware of possible exploitation from scams for charities, repairs, even price gouging, and other disaster-related fraud. Knowing that there are risks and being made aware of them is the best protection against becoming a victim of fraud.

There are several ways to help yourself in the aftermath of a disaster. Residents should never give out information over the phone, via text message or through email. If someone is at your door, ask to see identification before speaking with the person. By staying aware of the risks, anyone who was affected can protect themselves and avoid further damages that aren't storm related."

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has also advised disaster survivors to be aware of those trying to take advantage of them. Scammers use multiple avenues to seek their victims, using phone calls, mail, email, text messages or sometimes even going door to door.

- FEMA recommends anyone with suspicions of fraud activity to call their hotline: 866-720-5721 or to call local law enforcement with complaints. They further recommend contacting the Federal Trade Commission if identity theft has occurred or there are changes on your credit report by visiting their website, <https://www.identitytheft.gov/#/> .
- The Securities and Exchange Commission has also released a warning to consumers about high-return investment opportunities based off lump-sum cash payouts from homeowner’s insurance after disasters. No one should invest money with an agency or person they aren’t familiar with or have done business with prior to the disaster event. To file a complaint, call 202-772-9295 or email help@sec.gov .
- To report price gouging in the area, contact the Division of Consumer Affairs by calling: 973-504-6240 or visit their website, [Pages - To File a Complaint \(njconsumeraffairs.gov\)](#) .
- For tips on how to spot and report disaster-related scams visit [Pages - Tropical Storm Ida Information and Resources \(njconsumeraffairs.gov\)](#) .
- To contact FEMA and file for Ida help, visit their website, <https://www.disasterassistance.gov/> .
- Pandemic-related unemployment fraud is still claiming victims. If you or someone you know suspects fraudulent activity related to unemployment, please call 609-777-4304 or visit the Department of Labor website, [here](#).

Commissioner Deputy Director John E. Lanza, liaison to the Sheriff’s Office, said, “Post-disaster, affected communities become easy prey for scammers because of the emotional toll it has taken on residents. Scammers will use any means to exploit others for financial gain, often with false and misleading statements which are confusing.

Being aware is the first and best step to protecting yourself, your family, neighbors and friends from becoming a victim.”