



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Pasco County Warns of Common Post Disaster Scams

~~Beware of Common Fraudulent Practices~~

PASCO COUNTY, FL ---- Now that Hurricane Irma has left our area, Pasco County officials are offering tips on how to protect yourself from unscrupulous behavior as cleanup and repairs begin.

Beware of fraudulent building contractors. Please use licensed contractors to perform your repairs. You can go to <http://bit.ly/2xFcial> to search for licensed contractors by the license number or contractor's contact information. Make sure your contractor carries general liability insurance and workers' compensation. Don't pay for more than half the costs of repairs up front.

Phony inspectors or utility workers: Homeowners and businesses making repairs may be vulnerable to phony inspectors or utility workers claiming to represent Pasco County or a utility provider. Pasco County workers have government issued identification cards. Volunteer damage assessment workers from our community partners in addition to Pasco County employees will never require a payment from you or banking information. The job of inspectors is to verify damage or repairs that were completed to your property.

Bogus pleas for post-disaster donations. Dishonest solicitors may play on the emotions of residents recovering from disasters. False disaster aid solicitations may arrive by phone, email, letter, or face-to-face visits. Ask for the charity's exact name, street address, phone number, and web address, then phone the charity directly and confirm that the person asking for funds is an employee or volunteer. Don't give cash donations and request a receipt with the charity's name, federal identification number, street address, and phone number.

If you wish to donate recovery items locally, Pasco County is asking for our community members to bring non-perishable food, water, and tarps for recovery efforts. Donations can be dropped off at the Suncoast Crossings Plaza located at 16400 State Route 54, Odessa, FL 33556. For questions concerning donations please contact Pasco County Customer Service Center at 727.847.2411.

Fake offers of free disaster or repair grants: Beware of anyone claiming to be from local or state agencies who ask to confirm or directly ask for your Social Security number, bank account number or other sensitive information. Federal, State, or County employees will not solicit or accept money from you for disaster assistance, inspections or for help in filling out applications.

Residents should keep in mind that Federal, State, and County government employees will have identification badges and will not approach you in your home for cash payments or banking information. There is **no fee** required to apply for or to get disaster assistance from FEMA, the U.S. Small Business Administration, or the State of Florida.

Scam attempts can be made over the phone, by mail or email, text, or in person:

There seems to be no limit to the inventiveness of those wanting to commit fraud. Residents are asked to remain alert, ask questions, require photo identification, contact information, and can call the agency who is being represented for confirmation when someone approaches you and claims to represent a government agency. Relying on only a uniform or shirts with agency logos is not considered an official identifying factor. If you are unsure or uncomfortable with anyone you encounter, please contact the local offices or local law enforcement for assistance.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): FEMA workers are canvassing Pasco County to encourage residents to sign up for federal assistance. These workers will have official identification and contact information for verification on them. Pasco County officials want our residents to be informed on how to protect themselves from scam artists.

Residents should keep in mind that Federal, State, and County government employees will have identification badges and will not approach you in your home for cash payments or banking information. There is **no fee** to apply for or to get disaster assistance from FEMA, the U.S. Small Business Administration, or the State of Florida.

Beware of visits, calls or e-mails claiming to be from local or state agencies asking for your Social Security number, bank account number or other sensitive information. Federal, State, or County employees will not solicit or accept money for disaster assistance, inspections or for help in filling out applications.

Those who question the validity of a contact or suspect fraud is encouraged to call the toll free FEMA Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721 or the Florida Attorney General's fraud and price gouging hotline at 866-966-7226. Complaints also may be made by contacting local law enforcement agencies.

Access Pasco County's latest news, updates, and information by downloading the MyPasco App which is available here: <http://bit.ly/1SFTID9>.