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# Disaster News



Mississippi Emergency Management Agency – Federal Emergency Management Agency

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MEDIA CONTACTS:** MEMA - 601-960-9039 or 601-953-3622  
FEMA - 662-329-7570

## **In the Wake of the Tornadoes, Beware of Fraud**

**COLUMBUS, MS**—As those affected by the recent tornadoes turn their energy and resources to cleaning up, repairing, and replacing their damaged property, it's important to keep in mind that people with disrupted lives can be an easy mark for con artists.

A common scam is when a person poses as an inspector or loss verifier of disaster-damaged property. Some of these "inspectors" charge a fee for what they do. Some may have official-looking identification that they use to get inside residents' property. So beware, caution state and federal officials.

"Inspectors from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) will have specific agency identification showing that they are authorized to do an inspection," said Federal Coordinating Officer Michael Bolch. "Always ask for official identification before you let anyone into your home, no matter what agency they claim to be from. If you have any doubts, check out the people with the agency they say they represent."

"Please note that these inspections are free to those who are being inspected," said State Coordinating Officer Leon Shaifer.

"We caution you to beware of fraudulent home repair salesmen or contractors, too," added Shaifer.

He also advises that when considering replacing an appliance, check to see whether or not it is usable. Often all that is needed is to clean the item thoroughly and start it up. Check with the manufacturer for any special recommendations.

If you strongly suspect fraud, call the FEMA fraud detection line at 800-323-8603 or call the local police, sheriff or Mississippi Attorney General's Office, Consumer Protection Division toll-free at 800-281-4418.