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PRESS RELEASE **FRAUDULENT APPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS**

Napa County District Attorney Allison Haley warned Napa County residents of scams involving fraudulently filed applications for Social Security benefits. The District Attorney's Office received several reports from residents whose personal identifying information, including social security numbers, was used to file a fraudulent claim for Social Security benefits. As FEMA related fraud surfaced recently as a result of the wildfires, these additional claims came to our attention.

Napa County residents should be aware that if you received a letter in the mail from the Social Security Administration (SSA) stating that you filed a claim for Social Security benefits, and you have not filed a claim for benefits, then someone is using your personal identifying information to file a fraudulent claim.

The SSA requests that you immediately contact the Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General Hotline to report the fraud. They can be reached online at www.ssa.gov/fraudreport/oig/public_fraud_reporting/form.htm; by telephone at (800) 269-0271 or their TTY line at (866) 501-2101 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time; by facsimile at (410) 597-0118; or you can report directly to any Social Security office, including Napa's local office at 1850 Soscol Avenue, Suite 102.

If you have been a victim of this scam, you may also be a victim of identity theft. You should take the following steps: report the crime to the police and ask the police to issue a police report of identity theft; report the fraud to the three major credit bureaus, Equifax at (800) 525-6285, Experian at (888) 397-3742, and TransUnion at (800) 680-7289; carefully review your credit reports for accounts you do not recognize or inquiries you did not authorize; and consider a credit monitoring service, placing a credit alert on your credit record or a credit freeze for protection against new accounts being opened in your name. If you suspect you are a victim of identity theft, you can find more information on what to do on the Attorney General's website at <https://oag.ca.gov/idtheft/facts/victim-checklist> or the Federal Trade Commission's website at www.identitytheft.gov.