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PRESS RELEASE

DISTRICT ATTORNEY WARNS OF FRAUDULENT FEMA APPLICATIONS

Napa County District Attorney Allison Haley warned Napa County residents of scams involving fraudulently filed applications for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance. The District Attorney's Office received several reports from residents whose personal identifying information, including their social security numbers, was used to file a fraudulent FEMA application. Some residents reported that they attempted to apply for FEMA assistance, only to find that someone had already applied under their name. While other residents, who had not filed applications for assistance, reported that FEMA-affiliated inspectors came to their homes to ask about their applications.

Napa County residents should be aware that FEMA will not send inspectors to your residence unless you have filed an application for assistance. FEMA inspectors will not collect personal identifying information or bank account information at your residence. This information will only be requested when a person fills out the application online or at a Local Assistance Center. All FEMA employees and contractors will have federally-issued photo identification badges, which you should request to see.

If an individual shows up at your home to conduct a FEMA inspection and you have not filed an application for assistance, FEMA requests that you immediately contact the Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General at (800) 323-8603 or www.oig.dhs.gov. If you attempt to file an application for assistance, but find that someone has already filed an application in your name, FEMA requests that you call the Disaster Fraud Line at (866) 720-5721. Contacting FEMA as soon as possible may prevent payment to the individual responsible for the fraud. You can find more information at <https://www.disasterassistance.gov>.

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 or a credit freeze for protection against new accounts being opened in your name. You can find more information on what to do if you suspect you are a victim of identity theft on the Attorney General's website at <https://oag.ca.gov/idtheft/facts/victim-checklist>.