Post Disaster Awareness

A Message from The Office of the San Bernardino County District Attorney

Local Law Enforcement
In case of emergency
DIAL 911

To report a crime contact your local law enforcement agency

Insurance Fraud is a Crime Punishable by Imprisonment
Penal Code 550

District Attorney
Consumer Protection Unit
(909) 382-7748

District Attorney
Bureau of Victim Services

San Bernardino
(909) 387-6540
Rancho Cucamonga
(909) 945-4241
Victorville
(760) 243-8619

Better Business Bureau
www.bbbsouthland.org
(909) 825-7280

San Bernardino County Animal Care & Control
(800) 472-5609

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Avoid the Post-Disaster Rip-Offs

Price Gouging
For at least 30 days after an emergency is declared, businesses and individuals are not allowed to increase prices by more than 10% on rental houses, hotels and motels, food, drink, (including for animals), tools, construction materials, flashlights, blankets, batteries, soaps, diapers, prescription and nonprescription medicines and first-aid products. The rule applies for 180 days for emergency cleanup and reconstruction services. Save any estimates or receipts.

Vendor Fraud
These folks represent themselves as professional intermediaries who claim for a fee they can arrange low-interest loans, expedite relief grants and insurance adjustments and claims. Unscrupulous vendors will often sell substandard materials to victims.

Charity Scams
Con artists try to collect funds for non-existent charities. Only give to those you know are reliable. Beware of copy-cat or similar names to reputable charities. Ask for written information and proof that your contribution is tax-deductible.

Fraudulent Contractors
There are two categories: Those working without a license and those who have licenses, but have accepted more work than can be capably met. They do not have the resources, work is often sub-standard or not completed.

Fake Disaster Officials
Always ask for identification and check it out before letting anyone into your home. Some of these rip-off artists will claim that you must pay a processing fee to secure relief.

Tips for Hiring a Contractor
1. Deal with only a licensed and insured contractor.
2. Don’t hire the first contractor that comes along. Get recommendations from friends, relatives, neighbors, and co-workers.
3. Take your time signing a contract.
4. DO NOT deal with a contractor who asks you to pay for the entire job up-front.
5. Be skeptical of contractors who encourage you to spend high amounts of money on temporary repairs.
6. Ask a knowledgeable friend, relative, or attorney to review the home repair contract before you sign it.
7. Ask and check for references.
8. Check with Contractors State License Board to verify the license.

Disasters attract fly-by-night contractors and door-to-door scam artists into the area. These individuals are very eager to capitalize on your misfortunes.

After loss or damage has occurred, keep the following in mind:

- Beware of Identity Theft. Do not give any of your personal information such as Social Security Number, driver’s license number, or insurance information to anyone contacting you.
- Keep a log of names of the people you speak with along with the dates, times and a summary of pertinent points.
- Contact your insurance company immediately to report your loss. Follow their instructions. Do not clean up until they instruct you to do so.
- Take your own pictures documenting damage.
- Do not rush into repairs or rebuilding. Consider all your alternatives. A good contractor will let you check things out before you make a decision.
- Contact U.S. Post Office (800) 275-8777 to make proper arrangements to stop mail delivery.