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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 11, 2020

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IEMA Warns Storm Survivors of Potential for Scams

Report suspected fraud to Illinois Attorney General Office

SPRINGFIELD – Disasters like the severe weather that struck several Illinois communities Monday often brings out the best in people, but unfortunately, disasters can also bring out the worst in others who use the opportunity to prey on storm survivors. The Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) today warned people affected by recent storms to be alert for such scams, which can take a variety of forms.

“It’s appalling that anyone would see this situation as an opportunity to scam others, but unfortunately this is something often seen after disasters,” said IEMA Director Alicia Tate-Nadeau. “Everyone affected by these storms should be aware of this potential threat and take steps to protect their personal information.”

The state is working with local authorities to collect damage information that will help guide the next steps in the recovery process. Local emergency managers will always carry official identification, and proper PPE, when visiting a home that sustained storm damage. Residents should always ask to see ID if they have any questions about the legitimacy of anyone who may approach them.

Other post-disaster scams include fraudulent housing inspectors, building contractors and donation solicitors. IEMA is working with the Attorney General’s office to warn residents in impacted areas to be on alert for scammers looking to exploit homeowners and business owners who may be in need of repairs from storm-related damage. Also, never pre-pay for repair services, and remember -- if it’s too good to be true it probably is.

It is also important to note that general contractors are not required by state law to be licensed, but municipalities may require permits. Additionally, insurance adjusters must be licensed by the Illinois Department of Insurance, and roofers must be licensed by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation. Home and business owners should check with their local governments for more information about permits or other local requirements.

If you are contacted and suspect fraud, report the incident to your local law enforcement, or contact the Consumer Fraud Hotline at 1-800-243-0618.