



Press Release

Attorney General Frosh Warns Marylanders to Be Wary of Scams Following a Natural Disaster *Hurricane Florence Is Expected to Hit the Eastern Seaboard This Week; Damage May Be Extensive*

BALTIMORE, MD (September 11, 2018) - Hurricane Florence is heading toward the Mid-Atlantic this week, and while we hope that all Marylanders are safe and that any damage to personal property is minimal, there will likely be many individuals impacted by the severe weather. Unfortunately, fraudulent and unscrupulous individuals often use natural disasters as an opportunity to prey upon those impacted by the weather.

“Marylanders should always be on guard for the flood of con artists who try to take advantage of consumers after a big storm,” said Attorney General Brian E. Frosh. “Be careful with door-to-door salesmen using high pressure tactics to get your hard-earned money. I urge all Marylanders to get informed about the possibility of scams related to storm recovery, and to take steps to avoid falling victim to these deceptive tactics.”

Some of the most common scams that occur before and after natural disasters involve charities, insurance, and clean-up/repair services. Charity scams take advantage of your generosity by asking for donations that will never reach those actually in need. Insurance scams play on homeowners’ fears, usually by calling and warning that flood insurance premiums are due just prior to a storm hitting the area. Clean-up/debris removal and home repair scams tend to offer quick and cheap service, but may not deliver on those promises or are unable or unlicensed to perform the service they are offering.

Be especially careful of the “storm-chaser” scam, not to be confused with storm-chasers who pursue severe weather events for curiosity or scientific reasons. Storm-chaser scammers are contractors who descend on storm-ravaged areas and have homeowners sign extremely vague contracts while they are overwhelmed by the damage to their homes. These contracts do not have a scope of work or price, and usually commit the homeowner to use that contractor for whatever work and price their insurance company determines. If the consumer does not use them, they have to pay a large buyout fee. Some of these contractors may not complete the work or may use cheap materials and shabby craftsmanship. To avoid falling victim, you should get repair quotes from multiple sources, check the contractor’s references, and confirm that they are licensed and registered to work in your area.

Protect yourself with information about the dangers of scams related to natural disasters. The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General offers several publications online, including [Home Repair Scams](#) and [Donating to Charities](#), that can help you identify legitimate organizations and businesses and keep you safe from scams and swindlers. If you feel you

have been victimized by a scam, you can file a complaint online at www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov or call the Consumer Protection Division at 410-528-8662.