



FEMA

March 1, 2005
FEMA-1580-DR-OH-PR015

Contact:

FEMA	Russ Edmonston	614-890-8254
Ohio EMA	Julie Hinds	614-890-8424
Ohio	Michelle Gatchell	614-466-3840
SBA	Colleen Hiam	716-282-4612

Disaster News

IN THE WAKE OF FLOODING, BEWARE OF FRAUD

And Ask for Official ID When Showing Damage to Inspectors

COLUMBUS, OH — In the aftermath of a disaster, victims are in a vulnerable condition. Their lives have been turned upside down, and they need help. This creates an ideal situation for con artists to take advantage of people. Federal and state disaster recovery officials caution disaster victims to be on the look out for anyone using the disaster as an opportunity to defraud.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) uses professional home inspectors, and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) uses professional loss verifiers to evaluate the damages and losses to your property. These legitimate inspectors and loss verifiers will always make an appointment to meet with an applicant at the damaged property, will always carry official federal identification and will never ask for payment for their work.

"A common scam is posing as a FEMA or SBA representative," said Lee Champagne, FEMA coordinating officer. "If anyone comes to your door saying they are with a government agency or utility, insist on seeing their identification. And, if someone posing as a federal employee or federal contractor attempts to collect money for 'assistance' given, report that person and his or her vehicle number to the local police department," added Champagne.

"Victims of recent storms and flooding should be extremely cautious. Don't let the sense of urgency to repair your home lead you to make a decision you may regret," said Attorney General Jim Petro. "Before hiring contractors, be sure to check their references, clear them through your local Better Business Bureau or the Ohio Attorney General's Consumer Protection Section online at www.ag.state.oh.us or by calling toll-free at **1-800-282-0515**.

The Ohio Emergency Management Agency coordinates the state's response and recovery from the State of Ohio Emergency Operations Center. One of the primary focuses of the agency is to ensure that Ohio citizens are prepared to respond to and recover from an emergency or disaster and to lead mitigation efforts against the effects of future disasters. During times of disasters,

PAGE TWO – Beware of Fraud

Ohio EMA coordinates activities of responding state agencies and maintains liaison with similar agencies of other states and of the federal government.

FEMA prepares the nation for all hazards and manages federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates mitigation activities, trains first responders, works with state and local emergency managers, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration.

###