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\*\*\*\*\*CONSUMER ALERT\*\*\*\*\*CONSUMER ALERT\*\*\*\*\*

**ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN URGES RESIDENTS TO SEEK FEMA HELP*****Madigan warns homeowners of storm chasers exploiting water damage***

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today encouraged residents of communities impacted by this summer's heavy rains and flooding to seek help for property damage at area Disaster Recovery Centers.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) recovery centers are able to assist homeowners struggling with water damage. The newest of its centers is the Austin Area Disaster Recovery Center, 4905 W. North Ave., Chicago. To find a Disaster Recovery Center, visit <https://asd.fema.gov/inter/locator/drcLocator.jsp> or call the FEMA Helpline at 1-800-621-3362, TTY 1-800-462-7585.

Last month FEMA designated \$35 million in assistance for residents in the following counties: Carroll, Cook, DuPage, Jo Daviess, Ogle, Stephenson and Winnebago.

Attorney General Madigan added a warning to residents to be on alert for scam artists exploiting damage caused by natural disasters, including some who may be impersonating government representatives. "Storm chasers" try to catch desperate homeowners and pressure them into making a quick and often expensive decision.

Media reports in the wake of previous major storms and tornadoes indicated that consumers were called by someone falsely claiming to be associated with FEMA and requesting bank account information from the consumer that would assist with the repair of their storm-damaged home.

Madigan urged consumers to alert her office and local law enforcement if suspicious storm chasers solicit the area and offered these tips to protect against dishonest contractors:

- Call the Attorney General's Consumer Fraud Hotline to check out a contractor and to find out how many consumer complaints, if any, have been filed against a particular business.
- Be wary of contractors who go door-to-door to offer repair services. Home repair con artists are often transients who move quickly into a troubled area. Ask for recommendations from people you know and trust and, whenever possible, use established local contractors.
- Even if there is a need to act quickly, shop around for the best deal. Get written estimates from several contractors and don't be rushed into a deal.
- Get all of the terms of a contract in writing and obtain a copy of the signed contract. Never make full payment until all the work has been completed to your satisfaction. Do not pay in cash.
- Be aware that you have the right to cancel within three business days if you sign a contract based on a salesman's visit to your home.
- Ask to see required state or local permits or licenses. Insurance adjusters must be licensed by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, Division of Insurance, and roofers must be licensed by the Division of Professional Regulation.

contractors to furnish customers with written contracts for any repair or remodeling work costing more than \$1,000. A contract must be signed by both the customer and the contractor.

The law also requires contractors to carry at least minimum amounts of insurance for property damage, bodily injury and improper home repair. Contractors also must provide consumers with an informational pamphlet entitled "Home Repair: Know Your Consumer Rights."

For additional information on how to avoid consumer scams, visit [www.IllinoisAttorneyGeneral.gov](http://www.IllinoisAttorneyGeneral.gov). If consumers suspect storm chasers are attempting to scam residents in their area, Attorney General Madigan urged them to call the Consumer Fraud Hotline:

- 1-800-386-5438 (Chicago)
- 1-800-243-0618 (Springfield)
- 1-800- 243-0607 (Carbondale)

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