

# Protection from Scams and Fraud During Recovery

In the aftermath of a disaster, scammers and fraudsters often exploit vulnerable homeowners navigating the recovery process. It's crucial to stay vigilant and informed to protect yourself and your property. Below are key cautionary items to help you avoid common scams related to mortgages, insurance, and building contractors. By taking these precautions, you can safeguard your recovery efforts and ensure a smooth path to rebuilding.

## 1. MORTGAGE FRAUD

- **Beware of Foreclosure Rescue Scams:** Scammers may promise to “save your home” for an upfront fee or ask you to transfer your property deed. Legitimate mortgage relief programs do not require upfront payments.
- **Beware of Fire Mortgage Assistance:** Only work with **HUD-approved housing counselors** or directly with your lender. Avoid unsolicited offers from companies claiming they can negotiate better terms on your behalf, instead go to this link [California | HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#)
- **Monitor Communications:** Confirm any correspondence claiming to be from your lender by contacting them directly using verified contact information.
- **Avoid Upfront Payments:** Do not pay large sums upfront. Instead, negotiate a payment schedule tied to completed work milestones
- **Be Wary of Lowball Estimates:** Scammers may offer unrealistically low bids to win your trust, only to demand additional money later or perform substandard work.
- **Demand a Written Contract:** Ensure the contract includes detailed project descriptions, timelines, payment schedules, and warranties.

## 2. INSURANCE FRAUD

- **Fake Insurance Adjusters:** Be cautious of individuals claiming to be insurance adjusters who demand fees upfront to expedite your claim. Legitimate adjusters do not require payments for their services.
- **Verify Insurance Representatives:** Always verify the credentials of anyone claiming to represent your insurance company. Contact your insurer directly to confirm their identity.
- **Avoid Pressure Tactics:** Scammers may pressure you to sign incomplete or blank claim forms. Always read and understand all documents before signing.

## 3. BUILDING CONTRACTOR FRAUD

- **Vet Contractors Thoroughly:** Work only with licensed, insured, and reputable contractors. Verify licenses and credentials with local licensing boards.

## 4. GENERAL RED FLAGS

- **Unsolicited Offers:** Be cautious of unsolicited offers of help, especially those that require immediate action or payment.
- **Requests for Sensitive Information:** Do not provide personal or financial information to unknown individuals or entities. Scammers may use this data for identity theft.
- **Pressure to Act Quickly:** Scammers often create a false sense of urgency to pressure you into making hasty decisions. Take time to research and verify any offer or claim

## 5. ADDITIONAL SAFEGUARDS

- **Keep Records:** Document all communications, agreements, and receipts related to your recovery efforts.
- **Consult Experts:** Reach out to trusted organizations, such as HPP Cares, for guidance on mortgage, insurance, and rebuilding matters.
- **Report Suspicious Activity:** If you suspect fraud, report it immediately to local authorities, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), or the California Department of Insurance.

**By remaining vigilant and informed, homeowners can protect themselves and their families from exploitation during this difficult time.**

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*Our services are completely free of charge*