

July 20, 2015

MADIGAN WARNS HOMEOWNERS TO BE ON ALERT FOR STORM-RELATED HOME REPAIR SCAMS

Chicago — Following last week's severe storms, Attorney General Lisa Madigan today warned western Illinois residents to be on alert for home repair contractors looking to exploit homeowners and local businesses needing repairs due to storm-related damage.

Madigan cautioned Illinois residents that scammers may quickly move into communities hit hard by storms to take advantage of people with damage to their homes. Madigan noted that these "storm chasers" use the opportunity to pressure people into making impulsive, and often expensive, decisions about cleanup and construction work.

Investigators with Madigan's office are working with officials in Cameron, IL and will be looking into complaints about contractors operating in the recently impacted areas. Contractors interested in working in Cameron must register at the Illinois Department of Transportation yard in nearby Monmouth, located at 710 180th Ave. Investigators will also be on hand in Watseka to provide assistance to local officials.

Madigan encouraged local residents and business owners to call local law enforcement agencies and her office's [Consumer Fraud Hotline](#) (1-800-386-5438) to report any suspicious activity.

"These communities face a long recovery process," Madigan said. "Unfortunately, there are individuals who will attempt to profit from the devastation left by the storms. I encourage residents to be on the alert for scammers trying to take advantage of them."

Madigan offered the following tips to help protect families and businesses from dishonest contractors:

- Be wary of contractors who go door to door to offer repair services. Ask for recommendations from people you know and trust and, whenever possible, use established local contractors.
- Call the Attorney General's [Consumer Fraud Hotline](#) to check out a contractor and to learn if any complaints have been filed against a particular business.
- Even if there is a need to act quickly, shop around for the best deal. Get written estimates from multiple 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.
- Never pay in cash.
- Be aware that you have the right to cancel a contract within three business days if you signed it based on the contractor's visit to your home.
- In the case of disaster repair, you have an additional right to cancel. If your insurance carrier denies coverage, you have the right to cancel the contract within five days of when your insurance carrier denies your coverage.
- Ask to see required state and local permits and licenses. Insurance adjusters and roofers must be licensed by state agencies. If the contractor does not have a required license, or if the name on the license doesn't match the name on the contractor's business card or truck, that should raise a red flag.

Madigan also reminded consumers that the Illinois Home Repair and Remodeling Act requires 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."

Madigan urged homeowners to contact her Consumer Fraud Hotlines to report being victimized by a home repair scheme or to learn tips for finding a reputable contractor: