

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

SBA DISASTER LOAN FRAUD ALERT

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) in conjunction with our Northern California Disaster Fraud Task Force partners stands ready to bring to justice individuals involved in fraud schemes against SBA's disaster assistance program. SBA's disaster loans have been subject to fraud involving identity theft, false eligibility declarations, misuse of proceeds, and submission of false invoices or other false statements as a scheme.

Consumers are encouraged to follow the following tips to avoid becoming a victim of fraud:

- ✓ Be wary of unsolicited internet or phone contact from those claiming affiliation with SBA.
- ✓ Look for .gov at the end of any government email correspondence or website address.
- ✓ When in doubt, contact SBA directly to verify validity of anyone claiming to be affiliated with SBA.
- ✓ If someone asks for money upfront for you to receive SBA assistance, it is NOT legitimate.
- ✓ Avoid paying someone to process your application for a SBA loan.
- ✓ If you choose to use the assistance of someone else to apply, review all documents carefully. Less scrupulous preparers may promise approval and alter your information to get you qualified. If you sign loan related documents, YOU are accountable for the accuracy.
- ✓ When applying for SBA assistance, please note the primary residency requirement for damaged property and also note SBA does not pay duplicate benefits (e.g., SBA loan amounts are reduced by any amount of insurance payments that may be received).
- ✓ Be wary of unscrupulous contractors looking to do home repairs. Avoid paying up front and, when possible, use contractors you know or who have references you trust.
- ✓ Be on the lookout for procurement fraud by companies contracting with the government to provide storm cleanup or other assistance/services.

Report any fraud related to SBA's Disaster Assistance Program to the National Center for Disaster Fraud by calling 866-720-5721 or by email at disaster@leo.gov. You may also contact SBA-OIG's Hotline by calling 800-767-0385 or by submitting a complaint online at <https://www.sba.gov/oig/hotline>.