



OIG Fraud Bulletin

October 26, 2023

Avoiding Disaster Benefits Fraud

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides funding to victims recovering from natural disasters. HUD's Office of Inspector General (OIG) monitors the use of HUD disaster funding to ensure it is used only for permitted purposes.

It is critical that applicants fill out all paperwork and answer all questions truthfully when applying for disaster benefits. In addition, it is a duplication of benefits (also known as "double dipping") when a beneficiary receives disaster assistance from multiple sources for the same purpose, and the total assistance received for that purpose exceeds the total need.

It is a federal crime for an applicant to knowingly provide false information for the purposes of obtaining federally funded disaster benefits that they are not entitled to. Additionally, if an applicant obtains duplicate or fraudulent benefits, they will be required to pay those benefits back.

INTEGRITY REMINDERS

- ***Answer every question fully and truthfully.*** If you are not sure about what you are being asked, seek clarification. Even if you have been advised by someone that it is ok to answer certain questions dishonestly, do not do so.
- If someone offers you, your family members, or your friends money or other compensation for falsely filling out an application for disaster assistance, that is fraud, and you should report it.
- When applying for disaster benefits, be sure to disclose other recovery funds you have already received or applied for.

EXAMPLES OF FRAUDULENT ACTS

- An individual in New York [plead guilty](#) to a federal crime for submitting false documentation in order to fraudulently obtain disaster benefits after Hurricane Irene.
- Multiple individuals in New Jersey were [charged with theft](#) for claiming that damaged homes were their primary residences (and thus eligible for benefits), when in reality the homes were their vacation homes or rental properties (and thus not eligible for benefits).

HUD OIG investigates allegations of disaster fraud involving HUD funded programs or benefits. These allegations can be reported to by contacting the HUD OIG Hotline at 1-800-347-3735 or visit, <https://www.hudoig.gov/hotline>.

All allegations of disaster fraud can be reported to the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud at <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

