



# City of Wharton

## Office of Emergency Management

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### **POST-STORM PREPAREDNESS: BEWARE OF FRAUD**

After the storm, many newcomers, from volunteers to state and federal employees, will show up in your area. Fraud artists show up as well. Here are some things to consider during the clean-up period.

- Use licensed local contractors, ask for references and check them before entering into a contract.
- Ask for a written estimate from at least three contractors, including cost of labor and materials.
- Read contracts carefully and read the fine print.
- Make sure the contractor carries general liability insurance and workers' compensation. If he or she is not insured, you may be liable for accidents that occur on your property.

Clipboards with official looking forms are NOT proof that an individual represents a state, federal or voluntary agency serving disaster survivors.

- Do not give out personal information, such as a social security number, when you are not sure of the identity of the person requesting information.
- Request identification, including a phone number for the agency to confirm the representative's ID. Legitimate representatives of government or voluntary agencies will have proper identification.
- Never pay a fee for help. Government officials or volunteers do not charge for disaster assistance.

In the wake of a disaster, bogus solicitations may arrive by email, by telephone or when someone knocks at the door. The best advice is to provide cash donations to known organizations.

To report suspicious activity, call the Texas Attorney General's Consumer Complaint Hotline at (800) 252-8011. For more information on fraud in disasters from the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division, click on:

**<http://www.oag.state.tx.us/consumer/disaster.shtml>**