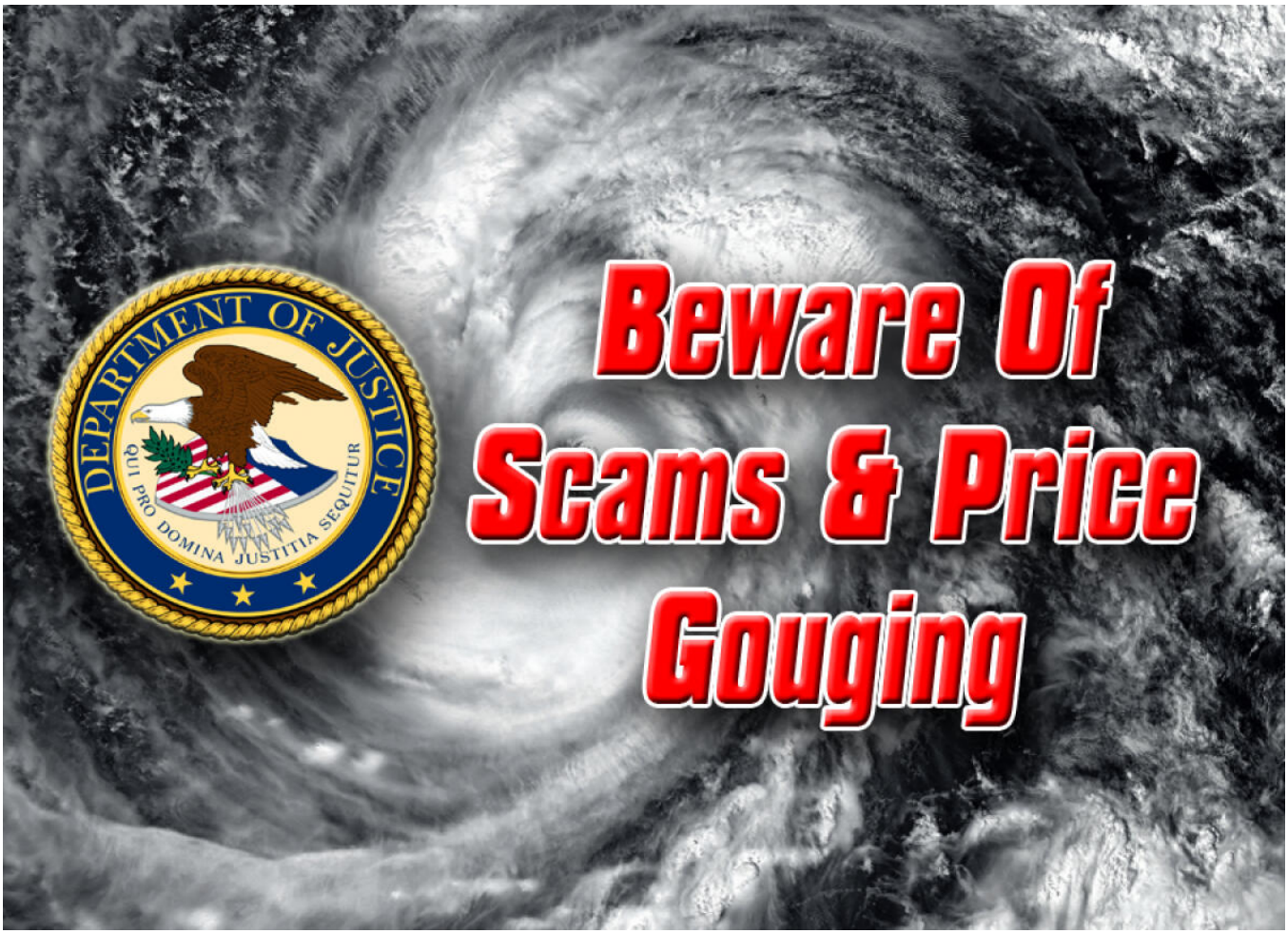


U.S. Attorney Urges Public To Beware Of Scams & Price Gouging

U.S. Department of Justice

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Dena J. King, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina, is reminding the public to beware of emerging scams and price gouging in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, and to report suspected fraud and price gouging to the National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) hotline at 1-866-720-5721, or online at www.justice.gov/DisasterComplaintForm.

“It is unfathomable that scammers will try to profit from the devastation caused by a natural disaster, but fraudsters will stop at nothing to fill their pockets,” said U.S. Attorney King. “I urge the public to be extra vigilant about potential scams related to Hurricane Helene, and to report suspected fraud and price gouging to the National Center for Disaster Fraud hotline at 1-866-720-5721, or online at www.justice.gov/DisasterComplaintForm. Reporting scams and price gouging will help law enforcement identify, investigate, and prosecute those who are attempting to exploit the devastation caused by Hurricane Helene for their benefit, and warn others about emerging disaster fraud schemes.”

Possible types of natural disaster scams include:

- Fraudulent charities soliciting donations for disaster victims that often mimic the names of well-known organizations or appearing linked to the disaster.
- Scammers impersonating government officials, offering disaster relief in exchange for personal information or money.

- Fraudsters posing as insurance representatives to collect payments or personal data.
- Scammers promoting non-existent businesses or investment opportunities related to disaster recovery, such as rebuilding or flood-proofing.
- Fraudsters promising expedient home repairs requiring upfront payment or downpayment.
- Price gouging for essential goods and services needed by disaster victims.
- Theft from evacuated homes and businesses during or after the disaster.

How to protect yourself from disaster fraud scams:

- Donate only to well-known charities after verifying them through trusted sources.
- Do not respond to unsolicited requests for donations via email, phone, or text, and do not click on links in unsolicited messages.
- Do not assume that online or social media charity solicitations are legitimate. Verify first!
- Use credit cards or checks for donations, instead of sending cash, via wire transfers, or via peer-to-peer mobile payment apps.
- Always keep in mind that government agencies and legitimate organizations will not ask for money or personal information via phone or email. When in doubt, contact the agency directly using a verified phone number or website.
- For storm related repairs, hire contractors that are reputable and always verify references. Beware of contractors who knock on your door or make unsolicited contact, and/or make promises that are too good to be true. Avoid making a large downpayment or paying in full before the repairs are finished.

To report disaster-related fraud, contact the NCDF at (866) 720-5721, or online at www.justice.gov/DisasterComplaintForm.