



U. S. Department of Justice

Office of the Deputy Attorney General

The Deputy Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

September 22, 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS
HEADS OF LITIGATING COMPONENTS

FROM: THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

SUBJECT: Department Response to Disaster Fraud

Allegations of disaster fraud are already following in the wake of the recent hurricanes. The call center for the National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) has already received hundreds of complaints from across the country. This issue warrants a coordinated, nationwide response. In order to ensure that the Department of Justice effectively and quickly combats fraudulent conduct relating to the recent hurricanes, I am issuing the following guidance relating to the coordination, investigation, and prosecution of disaster fraud allegations.

The NCDF is a national coordinating body that reports to the Department of Justice's Criminal Division. Its mission is to improve and further the detection, prevention, investigation, and prosecution of fraud related to natural and man-made disasters, and to advocate for the victims of such fraud. United States Attorney's Offices (USAOs) normally are responsible for leading the federal prosecutions of these matters. Nothing in this guidance changes the leadership role that USAOs appropriately exercise in federal criminal prosecutions.

As the NCDF receives allegations of fraudulent conduct, NCDF investigators review the complaints and refer them to the appropriate federal, state, or local agency in the relevant jurisdiction. It is imperative that the USAOs coordinate with the NCDF to ensure that the Department is able to properly track and manage its response to claims of disaster fraud and that agencies receive timely and relevant investigative leads and other relevant information.

Accordingly, all USAOs are hereby directed to implement the following steps:

1. Provide the NCDF with a disaster fraud point-of-contact no later than **Friday, September 29, 2017**. Disaster-related fraud can occur throughout the country. By way of example, in connection with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, federal prosecutors in 49 districts charged 1,370 disaster fraud cases involving 1,463 defendants.
2. Direct all disaster fraud complaints to the NCDF hotline (1-866-720-5721), e-mail address (disaster@leo.gov), and website (www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud). The hotline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. NCDF complaint reviews include de-confliction,

as well as identifying national trends and multi-jurisdictional schemes and offenders. USAOs should include information about the NCDF hotline in all disaster fraud press releases.

3. Log and track all disaster fraud cases related to hurricanes, and any other major natural disasters.
4. Notify NCDF about any disaster-related enforcement action planned between now and October 31, 2017.
5. Inform the Executive Office for United States Attorneys of additional staffing and/or resources needed to address increased workloads attributable to disaster fraud matters.

These steps are necessary to coordinate efforts and to best inform the Congress and the public about the Department's disaster fraud response.

In addition to the above action items, I am also directing the following additional steps relating to disaster fraud matters:

1. The Acting Assistant Attorney General of the Criminal Division shall designate a Deputy Assistant Attorney General (DAAG) to be the main point of contact within the Division for all issues related to disaster fraud. The Division will be available to support the NCDF and USAO efforts, and to provide additional prosecutorial resources, as necessary. The NCDF is also available to provide training, best practices, and lessons learned to federal, state, and local prosecutors and investigators.
2. All federal law enforcement agencies should coordinate with the NCDF and USAOs as they receive and investigate disaster fraud complaints.
3. The Department shall make additional staffing and resources available to the NCDF as necessary to ensure it is able to effectively respond to all incoming disaster fraud complaints.
4. The Criminal Division, Civil Division, and other litigating components shall assist and partner with USAOs to ensure proper resources are dedicated to the investigation and prosecution of disaster fraud matters. This may include the use of Civil Division resources to seek injunctive relief against disaster assistance fraud schemes targeting consumers.
5. The Criminal and Civil Divisions shall designate liaisons to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to assist with disaster fraud matters.
6. The Office of Public Affairs shall develop a Department media and community outreach campaign to raise awareness and visibility of the NCDF hotline and services.

7. Finally, I am directing United States Attorneys in districts impacted by the recent hurricanes to establish regional disaster fraud task forces to ensure a prompt and effective response to disaster fraud cases. These task forces shall work with the NCDF and other relevant stakeholders to hold criminals accountable for disaster-related fraud.

By working together, we can ensure that federal emergency relief funds are properly distributed to those who need them most and that taxpayers are not victimized by fraudsters and other criminals.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters.

cc: Attorney General
Associate Attorney General
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Drug Enforcement Administration
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
United States Marshals Services
Federal Bureau of Prisons
Executive Office for United States Attorney