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| **For immediate release:** October 3, 2022 | **Contact: DOEA Communications** communications@elderaffairs.org |
|   **State of Florida Reminds Seniors to Be Aware of Potential Scams Following Hurricane Ian****TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** – As Hurricane Ian recovery efforts continue, there are many services offered by the state and our private sector to keep Floridians resilient. During the rebuild process ahead, Florida Department of Elder Affairs Secretary Michelle Branham is reminding the public about common scams that oftentimes target older Floridians following disasters. The Department has published a digital Disaster Resource Guide with detailed tips and resources specifically geared toward older Floridians, which can be found at [https://elderaffairs.org/programs-services/disaster-preparedness](https://u7061146.ct.sendgrid.net/ls/click?upn=4tNED-2FM8iDZJQyQ53jATUfnUXrdFBLovbD9y2I2yrJ34tmA4fo3BTt4Xd6OtEyAvW487FWV5XoTaaGAkQY6-2BHK9infUofNqO-2BmqjVYRROIc-3DhVLy_xK1japI3Lshn3uPvI4t5LoCw0z8wSKID9b2Qn0bv0Y-2FpvvnuUQz9BrQfiUT4dT0gziPz-2FrXQx0RjBsuABkg-2F34sLpqOTCx9I1vO-2BeIxTByTfXheYNZgbELjV59Hk-2BHo-2F8EZwlwLhsYlyiSZ4Z0d4fiPucA-2FoR7njlgbdr3lx9fxSFLb3Bg595h50Z7jTYUDXNmCQaD1A1d5LvTHXsXRlPirf3KD10w6YCnXwM3TFMzEZIMBRuYxAAnyX4r9vF8JSYjaFBlXBEFH9s5Q1jXlwbsXHmXK3Qy66BsPZFX1xLGt3vWRhz5Yg3-2BWPSHhDo4TU-2B19IQWtMg-2Bugapv1cSE9bbavnAHxLBnP77YDo7Vk41o-3D).   “Hurricane Ian has devastated large parts of Florida, and the last thing our elders need is to be taken advantage of. Scammers prey on the kindness of seniors, putting them at increased risk of falling victim to scams that arise following hurricanes,” said **Secretary Michelle Branham.** Contractor and building repair scams, as well as charity and Medicare fraud, are especially common following storms. Secretary Branham highlights the following tips for older Floridians:* **Check before your hire** – Check to see whether a company is properly licensed and whether there are any consumer complaints filed against a licensed contractor at MyFloridaLicense.com.
* **File with insurance first** – Have your insurance company evaluate damage before arranging repairs to ensure that the work will be covered under your policy.
* **Be wary of tree removal services** – The strong winds brought by Hurricane Ian have resulted in littered yards and uprooted trees. Tree service scams will target seniors who may struggle to clean up their own property. Watch out for anyone who approaches unsolicited about tree removal.
* **Make sure your money is used for good** – Following a storm, numerous disaster-specific charities pop up. It’s best to donate to charities you already are familiar with. Contact the Florida Attorney General’s Office at 1(866) 9NO-SCAM, to determine whether the charity you are donating to has any complaints against them. First Lady Casey DeSantis recently opened the Florida Disaster Fund for those who want to help with Hurricane Ian response and recovery: [https://www.volunteerflorida.org/donatefdf](https://u7061146.ct.sendgrid.net/ls/click?upn=4tNED-2FM8iDZJQyQ53jATUWbhh9nDJN-2BvSPPE5Z-2Fl4J-2BSNvnFBrSUJ2FI4g3484TjybHcTnNI45UKWx5cRVBWXw-3D-3DD-qM_xK1japI3Lshn3uPvI4t5LoCw0z8wSKID9b2Qn0bv0Y-2FpvvnuUQz9BrQfiUT4dT0gziPz-2FrXQx0RjBsuABkg-2F34sLpqOTCx9I1vO-2BeIxTByTfXheYNZgbELjV59Hk-2BHo-2F8EZwlwLhsYlyiSZ4Z0d4fiPucA-2FoR7njlgbdr3lx9fxSFLb3Bg595h50Z7jTYUDXNmCQaD1A1d5LvTHXsXRlPsQJn2WoPaAx6Iahy3myhxNKblE0xDcttUMVvUVJXcNOMIfypewegxaFnUrdlLPoHR4DefSDc9FLgQvsh5Rjnx16ppOSuSegx4F3NFYBDNLYKQqO5vUO48KyNyKHbW3rfdncCMNhjP8I-2BsjkvRzEHbA-3D)
* **Watch out for aid scams** – The Federal Emergency Management Agency as well as the Florida Division of Emergency Management offer disaster relief through various means. If you’re seeking aid, remember that no state or federal disaster relief agency will call you for your financial information.
* **Check your medical bills** – Residents of assisted living facilities and nursing homes are prone to what is known as Hospice Fraud, which can include receiving inadequate or incomplete services from a hospice worker, workers falsely certifying or failing to obtain physician certification on plans of care, and being enrolled in hospice without the knowledge or permission of the patient or family. Home Health Care Fraud is another potential fraudulent billing risk during times of emergency. Call 1-800-96-ELDER to be connected with the Senior Medicare Patrol in your area to report potential scams.

Additionally, the Department has deployed Hope Heroes, with First Lady Casey DeSantis’ Hope Florida – A Pathway to Purpose initiative, to support older Floridians in Charlotte and Lee counties. Hope Heroes will be serving Florida’s senior population volunteering in shelters, conducting home-based needs assessments, providing telephone reassurance, delivering water and shelf-stable meals, and providing assistance at the Department of Children and Families’ [Family Resource Centers](https://u7061146.ct.sendgrid.net/ls/click?upn=4tNED-2FM8iDZJQyQ53jATUT3mGNdOZN2sqEawtKBC2Xc3aSXOZmvZDKVvthOUmKvWgtvQ_xK1japI3Lshn3uPvI4t5LoCw0z8wSKID9b2Qn0bv0Y-2FpvvnuUQz9BrQfiUT4dT0gziPz-2FrXQx0RjBsuABkg-2F34sLpqOTCx9I1vO-2BeIxTByTfXheYNZgbELjV59Hk-2BHo-2F8EZwlwLhsYlyiSZ4Z0d4fiPucA-2FoR7njlgbdr3lx9fxSFLb3Bg595h50Z7jTYUDXNmCQaD1A1d5LvTHXsXRlPmGLBVr4Rs36ymT-2FMGe13MwOqXq4XBTB9hxXAmxN7uMnv-2BLuMn1gwNqwCIOtNQ1I5XsfNEEGEo8nZ7rNVEOanXMnLLrFby12dpdagXJUVyFP-2BE6xHKH8aA1r9J6DCLMZXh7BQnXBkwCyGefSRcC-2BZso-3D). For more information, click [here](https://u7061146.ct.sendgrid.net/ls/click?upn=4tNED-2FM8iDZJQyQ53jATUeqiIDfOSFWtp3-2F5cWa8EGJMG9WpZ7C3T7aXjr6XgajWpB-2FWkF9VJt5NyFyKWDE18YrjWInFXBENLm5CCj-2FEBilxraAsuiTkpw4MHc7nZ049Mx3h-2BNKqbgyIM5Wuvf9ZeFsfy8GcQ-2BCyQ0WpmqE3hhKqihb3SmOkDbMvMBkfd9lkL4YzyVTw6TdrF-2F6TgItvD8Zlk9JqP9GKwdP7M7Le9BzlTOhONI5p8Zp7IJ2R-2BI1u7TFr_xK1japI3Lshn3uPvI4t5LoCw0z8wSKID9b2Qn0bv0Y-2FpvvnuUQz9BrQfiUT4dT0gziPz-2FrXQx0RjBsuABkg-2F34sLpqOTCx9I1vO-2BeIxTByTfXheYNZgbELjV59Hk-2BHo-2F8EZwlwLhsYlyiSZ4Z0d4fiPucA-2FoR7njlgbdr3lx9fxSFLb3Bg595h50Z7jTYUDXNmCQaD1A1d5LvTHXsXRlPtgXbp75zvj61Ldu7ZZglD4kjelycXEy08L7gWkgFUD3R6WKaxdKTEZ82PdJrYXCBo2kU-2BBKgs0Rys2LpXs0Sj1B4WG7NHaIha5wuQ3nFbYJ-2FN7vfGXjpH-2BD52XJejznemrhmRvYbzbYPjwDb2R-2FGaY-3D).  To become a Hope Hero, visit <helpcreatehope.com>. To contribute to the Florida Disaster Fund, please visit [http://www.FloridaDisasterFund.org](https://u7061146.ct.sendgrid.net/ls/click?upn=TeZUXWpUv-2B6TCY38pVLo9r1C0l3kD9Uk9folc5AWfHD-2BdagIbpSoytuogArL5NOXCyLF_xK1japI3Lshn3uPvI4t5LoCw0z8wSKID9b2Qn0bv0Y-2FpvvnuUQz9BrQfiUT4dT0gziPz-2FrXQx0RjBsuABkg-2F34sLpqOTCx9I1vO-2BeIxTByTfXheYNZgbELjV59Hk-2BHo-2F8EZwlwLhsYlyiSZ4Z0d4fiPucA-2FoR7njlgbdr3lx9fxSFLb3Bg595h50Z7jTYUDXNmCQaD1A1d5LvTHXsXRlPnT5lvgYhAkVoJEqlQhmWVWFtXa4AiqzYdA2D3fho84rmE03an9ammiFgDdafJ9bc3GUxPm0r242EJO5l2DkeNaRwEZfsEk-2FMN-2FP-2BEiWR99fXmL4c2I73XlyJRTE3xTIxY3R-2FzxYG3-2F-2B7A0gEGtf12A-3D) or text DISASTER to 20222. Throughout Hurricane Ian recovery, the statewide, non-emergency Elder Helpline has remained fully operational thanks to collaboration from the strong network of service providers. Operators are available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday to connect seniors with resources in their area. Please call 1-800-96-ELDER to speak with an operator for assistance.  |

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