

NEWS FROM SCDCA

South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs



Brandolyn Thomas Pinkston, Administrator

September 22, 2008
Release #08-084
SCDCA Media Contact: Maria Audas, 803.734.4296
1.800.922.1594 (toll free in SC)
Email: scdca@dca.state.sc.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS ISSUES WARNING ABOUT HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS AND SCAMS

Columbia, SC.....Although the end of hurricane season is approaching in a couple months, the recent hurricane activity across Texas, Louisiana, Florida and other areas on the Gulf Coast and in the Southeast is a reminder that destruction may come quickly. For this reason, the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs is providing consumer tips on preparing for a hurricane and advice on scam and fraud prevention following a hurricane.

Hurricane Preparedness: Better Safe Than Sorry

Before the hurricane hits is the time to do your work. Just a few key steps will prevent you from doing a lot more work after a storm hits.

- Keep the following in a water-proof container and take with you: insurance documents, medical records and daily medications, bank account info, social security card, other identification cards or papers.
- Take pictures of your house before and immediately after the storm hits.
- Prepare to take your pets with you or to a safe shelter.
- Fill your gas tank before evacuating; you may be sitting in traffic.
- Follow all evacuation suggestions and routes.

About the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs:

Established by the Consumer Protection code in 1974, The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs represents the interests of South Carolina Consumers. Our mission is to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, mediation, enforcement and education.

For more information, visit www.sconsumer.gov.

Scam Prevention: The Storm Isn't Over

Unfortunately, before a hurricane has even passed, another storm is already brewing. It's the scam storm. Scammers prey on storm victims, taking advantage of their vulnerable state with the promise of help or aid.

Contractor scams: Never pay the full price upfront. Never sign a contract with blanks. Don't trust a contractor that seeks you out with "extra materials." Require a contractor's license and proper identification. Detail EVERYTHING in writing.

Flood-damaged vehicles: Check out the title of the car, initial date and location of purchase, and the seller's company information and location. Check the Better Business Bureau for complaints. Obtain a pre-purchase inspection by a trusted mechanic. Avoid cars that have been "salvaged."

Charity scams: Donate to organizations that are well established, well known, and well respected. Give directly to the charity, not a third party fundraising organization. Seek out a charity that needs your support. Be cautious of groups that may approach you with similar sounding names and pitches as legitimate charities.

For more information, contact the Public Information Division at 803.734.4190, toll free in SC at 1.800.922.1594, or online at www.sconsumer.gov.