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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 22, 2009

CONSUMER ALERT: Watch out for flood-related scams

Attorney General warns Washington residents to beware of cons, unregistered contractors and flood cars

SEATTLE – The Attorney General's Office today issued a warning about schemes targeting Washington residents whose homes were damaged by recent floods.

Possible identity theft scam

Snohomish County Emergency Management received a report of a scammer who phoned a homeowner and claimed to be a federal government employee. The caller said he's able to offer a low-interest loan to help repair flood-damaged homes. The Attorney General's Office does not know the scammer's motive or how many people he has called, but suspects he may have been seeking personal information and/or money.

Unregistered contractors

Homeowners and businesses should make sure that electricians, plumbers, roofers or other contractors they hire to do repairs or clean-up are licensed and registered to work in Washington. Reports of unregistered contractors who charge exorbitant fees or do shoddy work are more common after storms.

Check if a contractor is registered on the Department of Labor and Industries Web at www.contractors.lni.wa.gov. You can also see whether there are claims on the contractor's bond.

Labor and Industries warns that wires and equipment that have been submerged in water should not be re-energized without an inspection from a qualified person, such as an electrical inspector or electrical contractor. Flooding always damages wiring and equipment, and it is usually not visible and may appear later. Once the wiring or equipment has been under water, it could cause electrocution or fire. For more information on flood recovery, go to www.electricalprogram.lni.wa.gov or [click here](#).

Flood-damaged cars

Lastly, the Attorney General's Office reminds drivers and car dealers that individuals may try to sell flood-damaged cars in the coming months. These cars may look normal but almost always have serious problems including chronic mildew and corroded wires that lead to electrical failure. When buying a used car, you should research the title and the vehicle identification number. Carefully inspect the vehicle inside and out and have it inspected by a qualified, independent mechanic.

Report damages

Local jurisdictions are urging Washington flood victims to report damages. Whether you are a renter, home, farm or business owner – insured or uninsured – report your damages. For local emergency management contact information, visit the state Emergency Management Division's Web site at: www.emd.wa.gov or dial 2-1-1.

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