

# **Attorney General Raoul Warns Residents To Be On Alert For Storm-Related Repair Scams**

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CHICAGO - Following tornadoes and severe storms that struck throughout Illinois Friday night, Attorney General Kwame Raoul today warned Illinois residents to be on alert for scammers looking to exploit homeowners and business owners who may be in need of repairs from storm-related damage.

Raoul cautioned residents that scammers often move quickly into communities to take advantage of people with damage to their homes or businesses. Raoul noted these “storm chasers” use the opportunity to pressure people into making quick and often expensive decisions about cleanup and construction work. Raoul also warned residents that scam artists may be operating as public adjusters who offer “free” inspections to submit a claim to property owners’ insurance companies.

“We have too often seen scammers take advantage of the devastation caused by tornadoes or other natural disasters and use it as an opportunity to line their own pockets,” Raoul said. “As residents are assessing damage and making repairs, I encourage people to use the resources provided by my office, the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, and other reliable sources to ensure they choose a trustworthy contractor. People should be wary of any individual who solicits home repair or insurance adjusting services door-to-door.”

Raoul said general contractors are not required by state law to be licensed, but municipalities may require permits or have other local requirements. Home and business owners should check with their local governments for more information about permits or other local requirements before hiring anyone. Public adjusters must be licensed by the Illinois Department of Insurance (DOI), and roofers must be licensed by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR).

“Unfortunately, some are quick to take advantage of Illinoisans during their times of need and vulnerability, such as after experiencing a devastating weather event,” said Mario Treto, Jr., Secretary of the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation. “To help protect the public in such cases, I would encourage those entering into agreements for roofing repairs to verify that the roofer is licensed and in good standing with the Department of Financial and Professional Regulation by using the Professional Regulation License Lookup tool available on the Department’s website.”

Raoul offered the following tips to help families and businesses avoid dishonest contractors:

- Be wary of contractors who go door-to-door to offer repair services or “free” inspections. Ask for recommendations from people you know and trust and, whenever possible, use established local contractors.
- Visit the Better Business Bureau’s [St. Louis](#) or [Chicago](#) websites to see if a business is a member and whether any complaints have been lodged against it.
- Even if there is a need to act quickly, shop around. Get written estimates from multiple contractors, and don’t be rushed into a deal.
- Get all of the terms of a contract in writing, and obtain a copy of the signed contract.

- Never make the full payment until all the work has been completed to your satisfaction.
- Never pay in cash.
- Be aware that you have the right to cancel a contract within three business days if you signed it based on the contractor's visit to your home.
- In the case of disaster repair, if your insurance carrier denies coverage, you have the right to cancel the contract within five days of your insurance carrier's denial.
- Be aware that public adjusters do not work for your insurance company and may charge additional fees. If you submit a claim to your insurance company, your insurance company will likely provide an adjuster to review your claim at no additional cost to you.
- If you contract with a public adjuster, pay particular attention to the amount of fees being charged and whether you are obligated to use a specific contractor for repairs.
- Ask to see required state and local permits and licenses. Insurance adjusters and roofers must be licensed by state agencies. It should raise a red flag if the roofer or adjuster does not have a required license, or if the name on the license doesn't match the name on the business card or truck.
- Visit the IDFPR's [website](#), to search for roofing licenses. Visit the DOI's [website](#) or call (866) 445-5364 to verify that a public adjuster is licensed and in good standing.

Raoul also reminded consumers that the Illinois Home Repair and Remodeling Act requires contractors to provide customers with written contracts for any repair or remodeling work costing more than \$1,000. A contract must be signed by both the customer and the contractor. The law also requires contractors to carry at least the minimum amount of insurance for property damage, bodily injury and improper home repair.

Raoul encouraged residents and business owners to call local law enforcement agencies and his office's Consumer Fraud Hotline (1-800-386-5438 in Chicago, 1-800-243-0618 in Springfield, and 1-800-243-0607 in Carbondale) to report any suspicious activity.