



# FLORIDA CONSUMER NEWSLETTER

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A publication of the Florida Department of  
Agriculture and Consumer Services

## STORM PREPARATION TIPS

### Storm Preparation Tips

Florida has 1,197 miles of coastline, and all its cities are within 75 miles of the coast. There are no areas in Florida immune to the forces of a hurricane or tropical storm. If a storm strike becomes imminent, it will be imperative that you are prepared and informed.

### Have a Family Disaster Plan

Prior to the threat of a disaster, families can create a personalized [Family Disaster Plan at FloridaDisaster.org](https://www.floridadisaster.org). This site provides checklists and important steps to take before, during and after the disaster. The plan should also address the issue of pets. If you anticipate needing transportation or any specialized assistance, register now with your county emergency management agency.

### Have a Fuel Plan

Surges in consumer demand due to storms can cause disruptions in Florida's fuel distribution system. Early preparation by consumers, like keeping all vehicles at least half full, will reduce the strain on fuel distribution and will help ensure that fuel is available as needed.

### Have an Emergency Kit

Don't wait until a warning is issued and the stores are empty or closed to gather essential items for you and your family. The National Weather Service recommends assembling an emergency kit for your family. Visit [Emergency Supplies Kit](#) to get the list of emergency essentials.

### Food and Water Safety

Discard perishable food that has been stored in temperatures above 41° F for four or more hours. Dispose of any food that has an unusual odor, color or texture or feels warm to the touch. If in doubt, throw it out! Inspect canned foods for damage. Damaged canned food shows swelling, leaking, punctures, holes, fractures, deep rusting, crushing or denting. If flooding occurs, discard any food that has come into contact with flood water unless it is in a waterproof container. Contact your [county health department](#) if you suspect that your well may be contaminated.

## Generators

Never use a generator, grill, camp stove or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning device inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace or any partially enclosed area. Keep these devices outdoors and away from doors, windows and vents that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors.

## Fuel

The potential for water-contaminated fuel incidents increases after a considerable storm. If you witness flooding at a station during or immediately following a storm, report it to FDACS so we can have an inspector check the storage tanks for water contamination. Always keep the receipt of purchase and report any possible contaminated fuel incidents at 1-800-HELP-FLA or 1-800-FL-AYUDA en Español.

## Auto Damage

The [Florida Motor Vehicle Repair Act](#) requires anyone who is paid to repair motor vehicles owned by other individuals to register with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS). The act applies to dealers of new and used cars, trucks and motorcycles; garages; service stations; self-employed persons; truck stops; and paint, body, brake, muffler, transmission, mobile repair and glass shops. The act establishes requirements for estimates and invoices. Review estimates and contracts carefully for language that may assign your insurance policy benefits directly to the repair shop. Visit our [Motor Vehicle Repair webpage](#) for more information.

## Contractors

Check the license and complaint history of contractors before signing a contract or agreeing to have anyone do work for you. Call the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation at (850) 487-1395 or go to [MyFloridaLicense.com](#). Do not sign an "Assignment of Benefits" form for a contractor if you have not been instructed to do so by your insurance company.

## Charities

Give wisely! All charities soliciting within the state of Florida (excluding religious, educational, political and governmental agencies) are required to register and file financial information with FDACS. Call 1-800-HELP-FLA or 1-800-FL-AYUDA en Español or use our online [Check-A-Charity](#) tool to find out if a charity is properly registered. You can also find out how much the charity is spending on administration and fundraising and how much money goes to actual programming.

## Landlord/Tenant

If you live in a rental property that was damaged by the storm, you need to know your rights and responsibilities and those of your landlord. Visit [Landlord/Tenant Law](#) for more information or refer to Florida's Landlord/Tenant Law, [Chapter 83, Part II, Florida Statutes](#).

## Price Gouging

Anyone who suspects price gouging should call the Office of the Attorney General at (866) 9NO-SCAM or file a complaint online at [MyFloridaLegal.com](#).

## File a Complaint

Do you have a complaint about a business? FDACS can help, regardless of whether we regulate the specific industry. Call 1-800-HELP-FLA or select [File a Complaint](#) for assistance.

# JOANN AND FAKE SALES



You may have heard the news: JOANN Fabric & Craft stores are closing – and holding big clearance sales before they shut their doors. Looking to grab some deals? The real JOANN sales are only happening in person in their physical stores. But that hasn't stopped scammers from setting up bogus websites with fraudulent deals claiming to give you 80-90% off. Here's how to avoid these JOANN online impersonators.

People report seeing ads for an online JOANN's bankruptcy sale while browsing sites like Facebook, Pinterest, or Nextdoor. But JOANN isn't selling online anymore – their own website says so. So, if you click on the ad for a (fake) online JOANN sale, you'll go to the (fake) JOANN's website and see (fake) super-cheap deals. If you decide to buy, you'll pay and get an emailed receipt.

But soon, according to reports, you'll find out the receipt is not from JOANN. Your bank or credit card statement will show you've paid someone other than JOANN, and you probably won't be getting a package to go with that bill.

To protect yourself from scams like this:

- Be wary of unusually good deals. Scammers often reel you in with supposed "limited-time" deals and crazy-low prices to convince you to buy quickly. But slow down and make sure you're dealing with the real thing.
- Confirm the sale is legit. Check with the store directly to see how they're running their sale. In this case, the real sale is in-store only, so online "JOANN's sales" are a scam. To check it out, go to the company's website using a URL you know is real to avoid a search result scam.
- Pay by credit card, if possible. Credit cards offer more protections than debit cards. Always keep records so you can dispute charges if you need to.

Share this alert with friends and family, and if you see a scam like this, [report it to the FTC](#).

# WEDDING SCAMS

Congratulations on your engagement! Now that you are getting married, it's time to plan the wedding of your dreams. Before you begin planning, know how to spot scammers looking to steal your joy AND your money.

**Bogus Bridal Shops** – There are a number of online bridal shops selling “designer” gowns at a deep discount. However, some of these will either never deliver the gown, or send you a dress of inferior quality.

HINT: Do your research before buying a wedding gown online or buy your dress from a reputable seller.

**Vague Vendors** – Using stolen images and fictitious reviews, these vendors most often operate on social media and do not have a physical address.

HINT: Check for reviews on trustworthy sites, ask for references, and ask to meet at the office of the vendor to verify legitimacy.

**Scam Sites** – These operations typically offer amazingly low prices but require you to provide a large deposit in advance. Unfortunately, the venues may be nonexistent or double-booked, or the operator changes the terms or becomes unresponsive to your attempts at contact.

HINT: Visit the venue in person before committing, read all contracts in full, and use a credit card to pay so disputes are easily initiated for any fraudulent charges.

**Hoax Honeymoons** – Unscrupulous sellers of travel and sham travel agencies may try to separate you and your new spouse from your money and your personal identifying information.

HINT: Ensure the travel agency or website is authentic and read all contract terms carefully before booking your dream honeymoon. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services regulates sellers of travel within the state of Florida; you can look for licensed sellers of travel on the business [License Lookup](#). To learn more about travel scams, visit [Travel Scams](#).

**Registry Red Flags** – Ruthless scammers create fake online registries to take money or try to hack into a registry account to reroute and steal gifts.

HINT: Review the registry site thoroughly for legitimacy and use complex passwords to protect your registry account.

**Social Media Safety** – Sharing information online, such as travel dates, addresses of a venue or your home, put you at risk of theft or home invasion.

HINT: Be sensible about the information you post on social media.

For additional information or to file a complaint, contact the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services at 1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352), 1-800-FL-AYUDA (352-9832) en Español, or visit [www.FloridaConsumerHelp.com](http://www.FloridaConsumerHelp.com).

90%  
OFF



# UNFAIR OR DECEPTIVE FEES

Have you ever picked out tickets to an event or the perfect vacation rental and then ended up paying twice what you expected in fees at checkout? Help is on the way: the FTC's [Rule on Unfair or Deceptive Fees](#) took effect May 12, 2025. What might this mean for you?

The Rule says that anyone selling tickets to live events — like concerts or sporting events — or offering short-term lodging — like hotel rooms or vacation rentals — has to be upfront and tell the truth about the fees they charge. So: no more hidden charges. That means the price you see upfront has to include all the required fees the seller knows about. And if there are other fees that end up applying that they can't calculate upfront — like taxes or shipping — the seller must tell you about those, too, before asking for your final payment.

Even with the Rule in place, sellers can still charge fees. But the Rule means sellers have to tell you the truth about the price they give you. And if you know the true price upfront, it'll hopefully save you time — and money — the next time you search for tickets to a live concert, play, or game, or when you're booking your next vacation. For more information and to see the FAQs regarding unfair or deceptive fees, visit [The Rule on Unfair or Deceptive Fees: Frequently Asked Questions | Federal Trade Commission](#).

If you think a company isn't playing by the rules, the FTC wants to hear about it. Go to [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://reportfraud.ftc.gov) and tell us your story.



# BED BUG AWARENESS WEEK

“Don’t let the bed bugs bite!” is more than a nursery rhyme or slogan. It is a real-life issue that has affected 1 in 5 Americans. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, United States Environmental Protection Agency and United States Department of Agriculture classify bed bugs as a public health pest, like mosquitoes and ticks. Their itchy bites can last for weeks, they have potential to cause severe allergic reactions, cost over \$600 million a year, and an average of \$1,000 per home to control in the United States. Bed bugs are found in every state due to the bed bugs’ quick development of resistance to pesticides, unfamiliarity of the insect by the public, and increased international travel.

The majority of home infestations happen from bringing them home after traveling so beware and be educated. Bed bugs are attracted to carbon dioxide, heat, and human scent. They will hitchhike on bags, clothes, socks, and shoes, so you must keep an eye out when traveling.

It is essential that every person know what bed bugs look like, as well as when and where to inspect for them. The insects look like flat ticks but have six legs, are oval, brown, and can get up to the size of an apple seed. Bed bugs are most active from midnight to 5 am and shy away from movement by staying hidden. They usually live in their own filth, so look for their excrement and shed skins, especially in the seam of the mattress or under the mattress tag.

The following tips can help prevent and protect yourself, your family, and your home from bed bugs:

1. When you travel:
  - a. Pull back all sheets and check the mattress seam and tag, as this is where they typically hide.
  - b. Inspect behind the headboard, using a flashlight if necessary.
  - c. Never put any of your belongings on the floor. Put them up on a desk, luggage rack, or even in the bathtub. Bedbugs are weak clawed and can’t climb up smooth surfaces, however, they can climb up fabrics.
2. For your home:
  - a. Use an active or passive trap. These traps can be placed under bed frames or furniture legs. They will stop bed bugs from climbing up on you and are helpful home detectors.
  - b. Purchase a mattress encasement. This will exclude bed bugs from getting into your mattress or suffocate existing bed bugs that may be lurking inside.
  - c. If you bring bed bugs home on clothing, put the items in the dryer on the highest heat for 30 minutes to kill the bed bugs.
  - d. Never pick up trashed furniture: you could be bringing home some unwanted guests! Thoroughly inspect secondhand furniture before buying and bringing home.
  - e. If you have a home infestation, call a licensed pest control company for control.



Find out more at: <https://www.fdacs.gov/Consumer-Resources/Health-and-Safety/Protect-Your-Home-from-Pests/Bed-Bugs>

# MOSQUITO AWARENESS WEEK



## QUICK 6 Q&A

Celebrate Mosquito Awareness Week by protecting yourself!  
June 15-21

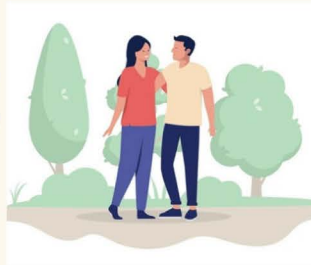
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### What is the best way to prevent mosquito bites?

- Wear long sleeve shirts and pants.
- Use EPA registered repellent.
- Avoid being outside during evening hours when mosquitoes are active.
- Remove standing water.

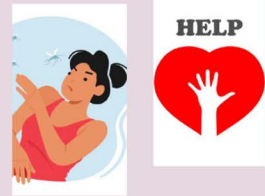
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### Why do I get bitten more than others?

People are unique, so some are more attractive to mosquitoes due to different levels in body temperature (perspiration), carbon dioxide (breath), and lactic acid (skin).

3



### What do I do if I need help with mosquito control?

Contact your local mosquito control program, which can be found here:

<https://www.fdacs.gov/Business-Services/Mosquito-Control/Mosquito-Control-Programs>

4



### How many species of mosquitoes are there?

- Worldwide there are over 3,500 species (except Antarctica).
- In Florida, there are more than 80 species.

5



### Do bats help control mosquitoes?

As opportunistic feeders, bats will consume mosquitoes, but not enough to significantly reduce mosquito populations.

6



### Why do only female mosquitoes bite?

Female mosquitoes require the protein from a bloodmeal for the proper development of eggs.

# ABOUT THE FDACS DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES

FDACS is Florida's state consumer protection agency responsible for regulating charities and handling consumer complaints. FDACS handles more than 400,000 consumer complaints and inquiries, oversees more than 500,000 regulated devices, entities, and products like gas pumps and grocery scales, performs over 61,000 lab analyses on products like gasoline and brake fluid, performs nearly 9,000 fair ride inspections, and returned over \$2.8 million to consumers through mediations with businesses.



The Division of Food Safety monitors food from the point of manufacturing and distribution through wholesale and retail sales to ensure the public of safe, wholesome and properly represented food products.

**CLICK THE ICON ABOVE TO SEE THE LATEST RECALLS, MARKET WITHDRAWALS, & SAFETY ALERTS.**



The Consumer Product Safety Commission provides consumer product recall information as part of the agency's mission to protect consumers and families from hazardous products.

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*The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is the state's clearinghouse for consumer complaints, protection and information. Consumers who would like information about filing a complaint against a business or who believe fraud has taken place can visit us online at [FloridaConsumerHelp.com](https://www.floridacconsumerhelp.com) or contact the department's consumer protection and information hotline by calling 1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352) or 1-800-FL-AYUDA (352-9832) for Spanish speakers.*