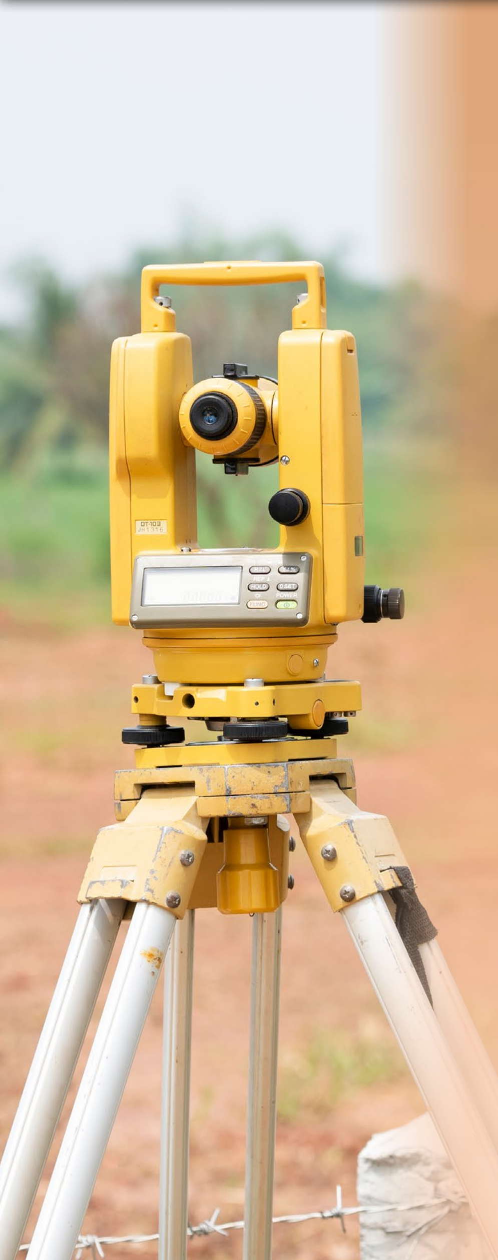
FLORIDA CONSUMER
NEWSLETTER
March 2026
A publication of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

NATIONAL SURVEYORS WEEK



March 15 – March 21, 2026, is National Surveyors Week. Have you ever wondered exactly what surveyors do and how it affects you?

What to Know about Professional Surveyors and Mappers

Professional surveyors and mappers make exact measurements and determine property boundaries. They provide data relevant to the shape, contour, gravitation, location, elevation, or dimension of land or land features on or near the earth's surface for engineering, mapmaking, mining, land evaluation, construction and other purposes. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) licenses and regulates professional surveyors and mappers in Florida through the Florida Board of Professional Surveyors and Mappers.

Why Do You Need a Professional Surveyor and Mapper?

As a consumer, you may require the services of a licensed professional surveyor and mapper (PSM) for a variety of reasons, like:

- To locate property lines – They can precisely locate your property lines using professional surveying techniques, preventing boundary disputes with neighbors.
- To obtain title insurance
- To find easements – Right-of-way easements may be owned by a neighbor or local electric utility company when they have no other way to access their land or easement except by crossing the land. As a buyer, you need to know this to understand who has access to the property and to the easement.
- To build new structures - Florida government agencies and city departments tend to require topography surveys before granting building permits and construction.
- To settle property line disputes –
- To locate utility lines – If a Florida utility provider has a right of access to a utility located on your property, they can require you to pay to remove trees or limit additional improvements (such as extending the home or building a pool or deck).
- To know exactly what property you are purchasing - They can detect potential encroachments, easements, or other property concerns that may impact your use of the land.

A licensed PSM is familiar with state and local land surveying laws, ensuring your survey meets all necessary legal requirements, and hiring a licensed PSM minimizes the risk of costly mistakes due to inaccurate property measurements.

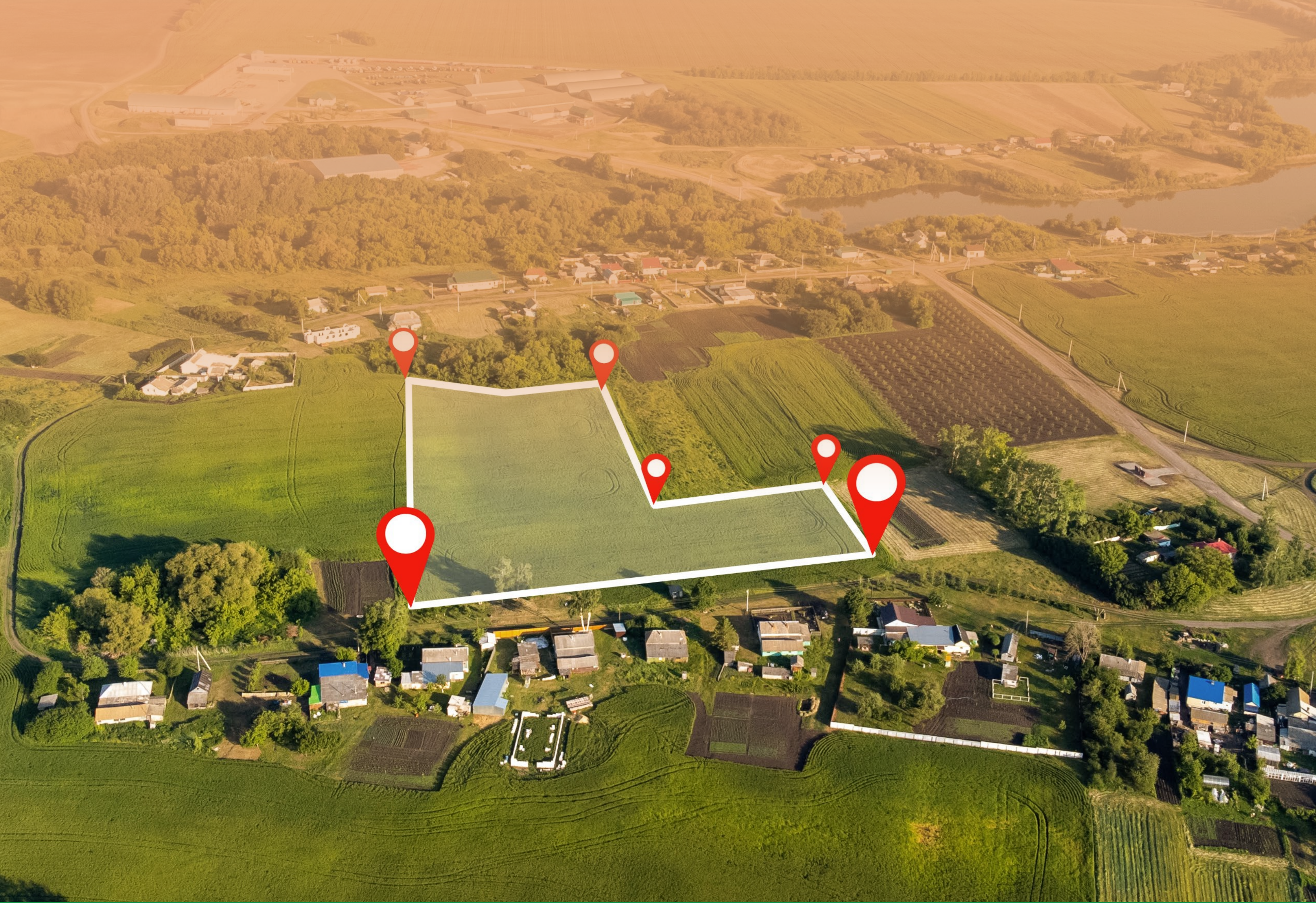
Selecting a Professional Surveyor and Mapper

Only a professional surveyor and mapper licensed with FDACS is legally permitted to offer and provide surveying and mapping services in Florida.

Choosing the right PSM in Florida is crucial for anyone involved in property transactions, construction, or land development. When choosing a PSM, consider the following information to help you choose the best candidate for the job.

- Verify the PSM is properly licensed by calling the FDACS Consumer Assistance Center at 800-435-7352 or visiting Business License Lookup at FloridaConsumerHelp.com.
- Contact the office of the Florida Board of Professional Surveyors and Mappers at PSM@FDACS.gov to find out if any disciplinary actions have been filed against a PSM.
- Make sure the PSM has insurance to cover any requirements for the job.
- Remember that cost is not the best way to pick a PSM. Qualifications, local knowledge, and experience should play a prominent role. The most qualified PSM may not be the least expensive.
- Inquire if the PSM has worked in the area or has other historical information that may help provide service more efficiently and effectively.
- Make sure the PSM uses qualified employees. Most crew chiefs should have several years of experience. CAD technicians should be employees, not contract laborers.

Visit https://www.fdacs.gov/Business-Services/Professional-Surveyors-and-Mappers for more information on professional surveyors and mappers in Florida.



ROBOCALLS

If you answer your phone and receive a recorded message rather than a greeting from a live person, it is a robocall. Robocalls attempting to sell you a good or service are illegal in nearly every instance, and many are scams. Below are some facts about robocalls and how to contend with them.

Unless a company has written permission from you to receive robocalls attempting to sell goods or services, that call is illegal. You might wonder why there are so many robocalls, if it is not legal. One simple explanation – scammers use this method because it is easy and cheap to program these calls via the internet from anywhere in the world. That being said, not all robocalls are illegal. Calls for informational purposes or debt collection are not illegal. Beware of those that are selling services to lower debt, however, because they are illegal and probably a scam.

One frequent robocall scam involves calls indicating the call is from a government agency regarding taxes, Medicare, or Social Security. The call may ask for certain personal identifying information to ensure you don't owe money or won't miss out on certain benefits. Do not provide that information – it's a scam! What if caller ID shows a valid number or name? Scammers know how to fake that, too.

How should you handle unwanted robocalls? First, hang up. If you answer the line and hear a recorded message to sell something, do not press any numbers to speak with a real person or remove you from their calling rotation. It's likely a scam and may lead to even more robocalls. Next, use call blocking to aid in reducing the number of unwelcome calls.

Go a step further by reporting the robocalls to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (department). Florida residents who have placed their residential, mobile, or paging device telephone number on the Florida Do Not Call list and continue to receive unsolicited or prerecorded sales calls and text messages are encouraged to file a complaint with the department against the business or businesses that called them. You can click here to submit your complaint online. The department categorizes do not call and telemarketing complaints as unsolicited communications.
Gather as much information as possible about the communication you received so that we can investigate and identify those responsible for contacting you.

If you receive a call from a professional solicitor, charity or seller of goods and/or services and you no longer wish to receive calls from that entity, tell the organization that you no longer wish to receive solicitations. Then file a complaint with the department so that there will be a record that you have previously requested that the entity stop contacting you via telephone. Businesses and charities are required to maintain a list of consumers who have made a do-not-call request, and it is a violation to call a consumer who has asked to be placed on the company's do-not-call list.

You can also report robocalls to the FTC at DoNotCall.gov. Report the number that received the call, the number on caller ID, and any number you're told to call back. Also report the exact date and time of the call, if you know it. Knowing all of this information helps the FTC track down the scammers behind the call. Even if you think the number on your caller ID is fake, report it. The FTC analyzes report data and trends to identify illegal callers based on calling patterns.

Does the Do Not Call list work? The list is intended stop unwanted calls from companies following the law. The list provides registered telemarketers with numbers not to call, so being on the list will alleviate some calls you receive. However, it does not stop scammers from making illegal calls.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? COPING AFTER FINANCIAL FRAUD

According to Fraud.org, reports indicate that consumers lost $12.5 billion in 2024 to scams and fraud. However, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) reports that number is closer to $196 billion due to under reporting. Although there are millions of victims each year, many feel humiliated and alone as this type of crime happens silently and out of view of others. In addition to financial loss, fraud victims may suffer emotionally and physically as well. Feelings may range from lack of trust in oneself and others, embarrassment, shame, and betrayal. It is important to address these feelings and get the support needed to overcome them.

Help Yourself

The first step, according to TD Bank, is by being kind – to yourself. You are not at fault and acknowledging that you have no control over a criminal's actions is crucial. The perpetrator took advantage of you by choosing to commit a crime, removing your culpability. Scams and fraud are an intentional exploitation of human nature. Knowing that you are not alone is also significant and can help with feelings of guilt. Remember there are estimated millions of people in the U.S. alone in your position.

To regain your financial confidence and peace of mind, add layers of protection. Monitor your accounts frequently so you can act quickly if you notice anything amiss. Implementing a credit freeze will bar anyone from opening any new accounts in your name, and adding two-factor authentication on online accounts will deter cyber fraud. Over time, the additional security should increase your self-assurance.

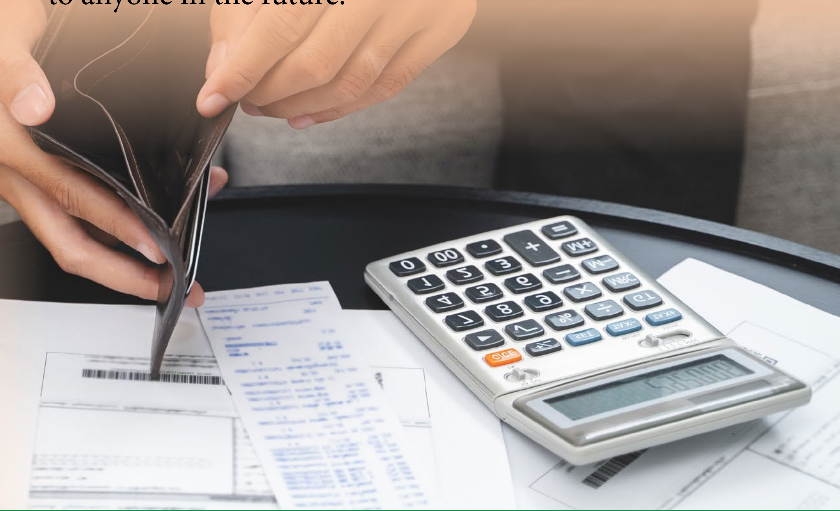
Get Support

While it may take some time to recover psychologically, it should not be prolonged and substantially affect your daily activities. If you find your day being drained by dwelling over your losses, or your quality of life is not what it was prior to the experience, it may be time to look for help and support elsewhere. Loss of sleep, feelings of hopelessness, or the desire to hurt yourself or someone else is not a normal reaction and needs to be addressed immediately. Look for local support groups or a financial therapist to provide some relief. Connecting with someone about your experience, particularly those who have faced similar situations may help with feelings of isolation and shame.

There are several nationwide resources available to those who have experienced financial loss due to fraud or scam. If you feel that you would benefit from talking to others about your experience, consider one of the following:

- **If you feel you are in crisis and need immediate assistance, contact the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988 OR text SIGNS to 741741 for the Crisis Text Line. Both services are free and available 24/7.**
- The AARP Fraud Victim Support Group provides individuals with an online forum to meet and interact with others who have experienced similar events. Sessions are a safe environment to give and receive valuable feedback and support from others who are on the road to emotional healing and recovery.
- Give an Hour® is a national organization offering free mental health support by providing clinical counseling with licensed professionals or connecting you to a peer support group.
- Cybercrime Support Network (CSN) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization on a mission to serve individuals and small businesses impacted by cybercrime, including peer support groups facilitated by CSN and a licensed counselor in a safe, virtual environment, and a military and veteran program.
- The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Victim Services Division informs, supports, and assists victims of crimes investigated by the FBI in navigating the aftermath of crime and the criminal justice process with dignity and resilience.

The first step in recovering is reporting the incident. If you suspect you have been a victim of fraud or scam, contact your local law enforcement agency immediately. The sooner it is reported, the more likely police will be able to catch the suspect. The more often this criminal activity is reported, the less it will happen to anyone in the future.



HANG UP ON UNEXPECTED CALLS SAYING YOU OWE BACK TAXES

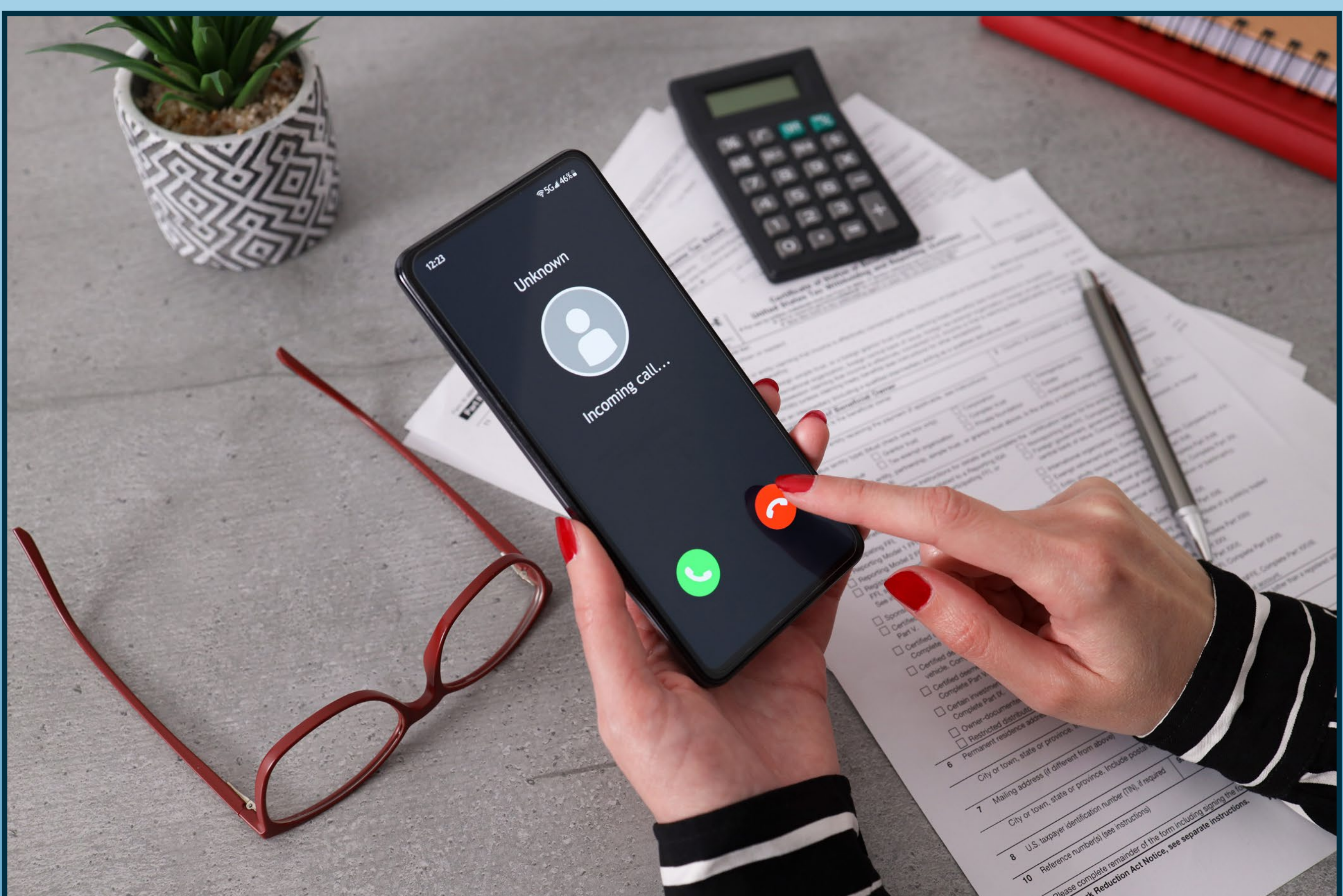
From Federal Trade Commission

We're seeing a big wave of reports about phone scams claiming you owe back taxes. But it's not the IRS calling, it's a scammer using a company name like "Tax Resolution Oversight Department." If someone calls you out of the blue offering to help you fix a tax issue, hang up. Here's how to spot the scam.

It starts with an unexpected call from the "Tax Mediation and Resolution Agency," or another official-sounding (but fake) government agency. They'll say you haven't paid your taxes and offer to connect you with a "tax resolution officer," who can do a "red flag check" on your credit and help you apply for an "IRS liability reduction program." But those aren't real programs and that's your sign to end the call. Some scammers leave a voicemail saying, "This may be our only attempt to reach you" hoping you'll call back right away. But it's all part of the story to steal personal information like your Social Security number — or in some cases, charge you an illegal upfront fee for tax debt relief that doesn't actually help.

Even if you owe back taxes, know this: the IRS's first contact with you will always come by **mail**, not by phone. Here's how to avoid an IRS impersonator and get real help:

- **Never give an unexpected caller personal or financial information.** It's probably a scammer hoping to drain your bank accounts or steal your identity.
- **Check it out through IRS.gov.** Contact the IRS directly for trustworthy information about your tax situation. Need to speak with someone? Only use a phone number found on the IRS's website. Never one a scammer gives you.
- **Read up on how government imposter scams work.** Start with ftc.gov/imposters and if you spot a scam, tell the FTC at ReportFraud.ftc.gov.



TERMITE AWARENESS WEEK

Termite Awareness Week is March 8-14, 2026. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), subterranean termites cause billions of dollars of damage annually in the United States and, in many cases, the damage they cause goes undetected in areas behind walls, in the crawlspace, or in the attic. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services recommends that you hire a licensed pest control company for annual inspections and subterranean termite soil treatments around your home. You can find out if a company is licensed in Florida at Licensed Pest Control Company Search.

Even with home inspections and treatment by a licensed pest control company, you must do your part to reduce conditions that attract subterranean termites and thereby protect your home:

- Reduce moisture: moisture is a top conducive condition for these termites and can include leaking exterior faucets and AC drain lines.
- No termite food: keep plant materials, firewood, and mulch away from your home foundation.
- No siding to soil contact: home siding material should not make direct contact with soil along foundation.
- No cracks or leaks: repair cracks and leaks around your home and roof.
- Light attraction: termite alates or swarmers will fly once a year to start new colonies and are attracted to light. Turn your exterior lights off between dusk and dawn or use a yellow bug light during this time.

For more information and tips, please visit our website.

Picture: Extensive Formosan subterranean termite damage behind a wall.

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] 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.