FLORIDA CONSUMER
NEWSLETTER
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# STORM PREPARATION TIPS

Hurricane season arrives on June 1 and ends on November 30. For six months of the year, Floridians need to be ready for severe weather, because no part of the state is 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. 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 and the Florida Division of Emergency Management recommend assembling an emergency kit for your family. Visit FloridaDisaster.org 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

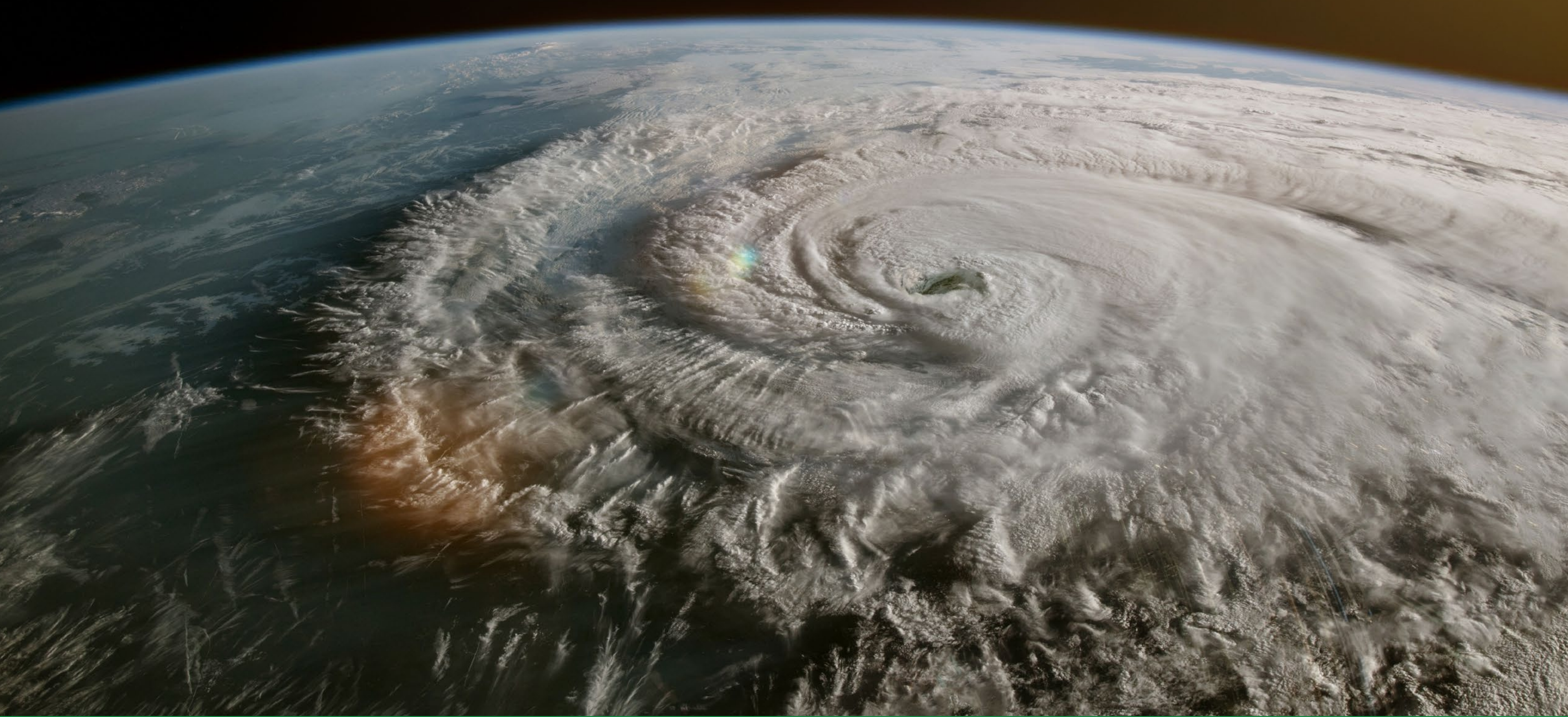
If you live in a rental property that was damaged by the storm, you need to know your rights and responsibilities and those of your landlord. Visit Landlord/Tenant Law for more information or refer to Florida's Landlord/Tenant Law, Chapter 83, Part II, Florida Statutes.

## 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.



# PENNY LESS?

On May 11, 2026, Gov. Ron DeSantis signed a bill allowing cash transactions to be rounded to the nearest nickel, with immediate effect. In response to the penny no longer being manufactured in the United States, SB 1074 was introduced, helping the state prepare for the absence of one cent pieces.

The bill does not require vendors to change their prices but affects the total of the purchase when payments are made with cash in person. The new law provides guidance to vendors for rounding purchases prices as follows:

- If the transaction ends in 1 or 2 cents, it rounds down to zero.
- If the transaction ends in 3 or 4 cents, it rounds up to 5 cents.
- If the transaction ends in 6 or 7 cents, it rounds down to 5 cents.
- If the transaction ends in 8 or 9 cents, it rounds up to the next 10 cents.

Transactions ending in zero or 5 cents are not rounded, and rounding does not apply for payments tendered by a method other than cash. The new law also has no impact on how sales tax is assessed, as tax will be calculated on the total cost of the transaction, prior to rounding.

# CONSUMER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

President John F. Kennedy introduced the concept of consumer rights in 1962, when he defined four basic rights of consumers to Congress. Later, the United Nations expanded the number of rights to eight. To be a savvy consumer, you must be an informed consumer, aware of the rights afforded to you as well as your responsibilities in that role. Do you know your rights and responsibilities as a consumer?

"Right" is defined as a moral or legal entitlement to have or obtain something, such as a power or privilege, or to act in a certain way. In this context, consumers' rights are protected by regulations which prevent consumers from harm. The Consumer Bill of Rights enumerates eight rights of consumers:

1. **Right to safety** – the right to protection from products which pose a hazard to humans and property, in both the sale and marketing of products, and leads to the expectation that items are safe when used in the manner intended and any warnings are abided.
2. **Right to choose** – the right to access to a range of products and services at reasonable prices.
3. **Right to be heard** – the right to voice concerns or complaints to a business, or to a government entity to influence policy.
4. **Right to be informed** – the right of consumers to be given certain reliable and sufficient information by businesses about products or services to make knowledgeable decisions. This right protects against false labeling, misleading claims, or incorrect marketing information.
5. **Right to redress** –the right of the consumer to have problems resolved fairly when brought forth.
6. **Right to consumer education** – the right to be provided with the tools, both knowledge and skill, to make sensible decisions as a consumer, such as comparing quality or cost.
7. **Right to service** – the right to be treated courteously and with respect.
8. **Right to a healthy environment** – the right to work and reside in an environment which is protected from pollution.

Each of the rights above assumes the consumer utilizes their rights, i.e. the consumer is responsible for availing themselves of the information and opportunities provided for them. Using the rights above, what responsibilities does the consumer have?

1. **Right to safety** – the consumer is responsible for reading and considering product labels and directions.
2. **Right to choose** – the consumer is responsible for comparing price and value when choosing products and services, identifying unfair or dishonest practices, and being honest with sellers.
3. **Right to be heard** – the consumer is responsible for reporting sellers or products do not adhere to law or safety practices, informing a business when a product or service falls short of your expectations, and utilizing this right without misusing it.
4. **Right to be informed** – the consumer is responsible for reviewing and considering provided information, seeking additional information if needed, and verifying the accuracy of information on a product or service.
5. **Right to redress** – the consumer is responsible for knowing how to pursue a solution to any complaint or grievance with a product or service, and following instructions when requesting a provider honor a guarantee or warranty.
6. **Right to consumer education** – the consumer is responsible for becoming an informed consumer and using the resources provided to protect their rights.
7. **Right to service** – the consumer is responsible for expecting to be treated respectfully and treating others respectfully in return.
8. **Right to a healthy environment** – the consumer is responsible for being environmentally conscious and making well-informed decisions about their environmental impact.

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Division of Consumer Services serves as the state's clearinghouse for matters relating to consumer protection, consumer information, and consumer services regardless of whether the specific industry is regulated by the department. A variety of consumer resources are available at Consumer Resources - Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services. If you have a dispute or grievance that has not been satisfactorily resolved, you can file a complaint with the division.

# GENETIC TESTING SCAM ALERT

*From Operation Senior Shield*

Scammers are increasingly targeting Medicare recipients with offers for "free" DNA or genetic testing. These offers may come through phone calls, door-to-door visits, health fairs, or community events.

**What to Watch For:**

- Offers for "free" genetic or DNA testing
- Requests for your Medicare number
- Pressure to act quickly or sign forms on the spot
- Testing offered without your doctor's involvement

**Important Reminder:**

Medicare only covers genetic testing when it is **medically necessary and ordered by your doctor.**

If you share your Medicare number, scammers may:

- Bill Medicare for unnecessary or fraudulent tests
- Use your information for identity theft
- Open the door to additional scams

**How to Protect Yourself:**

- Only accept medical tests ordered by your trusted doctor
- Never share your Medicare number with unknown individuals
- Take time to verify before signing anything

**How to Report a Suspected Scam:**

If you encounter a suspicious offer:

- Report Medicare fraud to the **Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP)** at floridashine.org or by calling 1-800-963-5337
- Contact **SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders)** for free, unbiased Medicare counseling and guidance at floridashine.org or by calling 1-800-963-5337
- Report fraud to the **Federal Trade Commission** at ReportFraud.gov
- Report online scams to the **FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center** at www.ic3.gov

Reporting helps stop scammers and protects other older adults across Florida.

**We're Here to Help**

SHINE counselors and SMP volunteers are available to help you:

- Review Medicare claims for suspicious charges
- Understand your benefits
- Report potential fraud

To find help in your area, call **1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337).**

To stay informed and receive real-time fraud alerts, sign up for **Operation Senior Shield (OSS):** www.opseniorshieldfl.com

# BED BUG AWARENESS WEEK

Bed bugs are a growing, real-life issue that affect 1 in 5 Americans and can cost over $600 million a year and an average of $1,000 per home to control in the United States. The Center for Disease Control (CDC), United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) classify bed bugs as a public health pest, like mosquitoes and ticks. Some of the health effects from bed bug infestations include:

- **Skin irritation:** Bed bug bites can last 2-3 weeks and cause skin irritation and rashes.
- **Secondary infections:** Secondary skin infections from the bite can occur such as impetigo, ecthyma, and lymphangitis.
- **Allergic reactions:** Bed bugs create allergens like histamines and tropomyosin. Allergic reactions to bites can range from bite marks to severe anaphylaxis.
- **Mechanical disease spread:** New research has found that bed bugs can mechanically spread Staph infections on their legs and bodies including resistant Staph infections (MRSA).
- **Anemia:** In cases of severe infestations, individuals may experience multiple bites each night, leading to a loss of blood. This can result in iron deficiency anemia, especially in the elderly, children, and individuals with pre-existing health conditions.
- **Insomnia:** Bed bug bites often occur at night and can disrupt sleep.
- **Anxiety:** Living with or fearing infestation can cause anxiety and other psychological distress.
- **Delusory parasitosis:** Some people may perceive bugs where none exist, leading to persistent psychological symptoms.

Find out more about bed bug identification, biology, prevention, and control here: https://www.fdacs.gov/Consumer-Resources/Health-and-Safety/Protect-Your-Home-from-Pests/Bed-Bugs.

# 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.

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

*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)*