



State Attorney
18th Judicial Circuit
Brevard and Seminole Counties



State Attorney William Scheiner

The Monthly Brief

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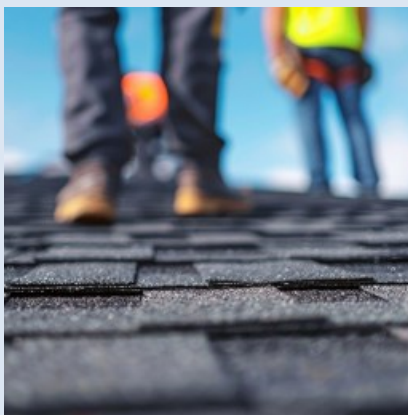
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Scams that follow hurricanes in Florida

Unlicensed contractor fraud

Dishonest builders frequently canvas hard-hit neighborhoods. They offer immediate tree removal or roof repairs, demand large cash deposits upfront, and disappear without doing the work. In Florida, contracting without a license is a misdemeanor criminal offense, which escalates to a third-degree felony during a state of emergency.

Protect yourself: Always verify contractor credentials using MyFloridaLicense.com. Know that if you pay a contractor a deposit of more than 10%, they must apply for permits within 30 days and start work within 90 days of issuance.



FEMA/Utility imposter scams

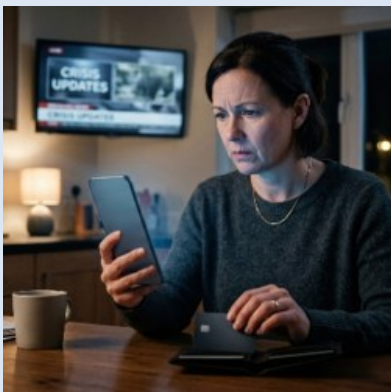
Con artists pose as Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) inspectors or utility workers. They may demand immediate payments to process relief applications or might threaten to cut off power.

Protect yourself: Remember, official FEMA staff never charge fees for applications for home inspections and never ask for bank information or a Social Security Number. They always carry an official laminated photo ID badge. Likewise, legitimate utility companies such as FPL never demand instant payment in the field.

Phony charity scams

Fake charities spring up quickly after disasters to pocket your donations instead of helping victims. Some solicitors use pressure tactics and may offer to send a “runner” to pick up your money. Reputable charities will not rush you to make contributions.

Protect yourself: Research non-profits first on the state’s online Check-A-Charity-Tool (easy to find by Googling). Any charity that solicits donations in Florida must register through this database and disclose key financial data.



Police: Stay safe by remembering ‘Five Ps’

The Bradenton Police Department’s Elder Fraud Unit has shared a simple checklist it calls the “Five Ps” to help Floridians spot scams and stay safe. Detectives say fraud schemes share these five common red flags:

Pretend: Scammers pretend to be from a trusted organization you know, such as a bank, the IRS, Social Security, a tech company, or local law enforcement. Caller ID can be faked, so never assume the name on the screen is real.

Problem: They claim there is an urgent problem: your account has been hacked, a warrant is out for your arrest, your computer is infected, or your benefits are about to be cut off.

Prize: Sometimes the pitch flips to good news. Scammers say you have won a lottery, sweepstakes, free vacation, or large cash prize – but you must pay fees or taxes first to claim it.

Pressure: Everything is framed as an emergency. They insist you must act immediately, stay on the phone, and not tell family or friends. That urgency prevents you from thinking clearly.

Pay: They demand payment in a specific, hard-to-trace way: gift cards, cryptocurrency, wire transfers, cash handed to a courier, or gold bars. Legitimate organizations never ask for these methods.

If you notice any of the Five Ps, hang up, delete the message, or close the window on your computer screen. Independently verify any sketchy claim by calling a number you look up yourself. Talk to a trusted relative or friend before sending any money.

Law & Order News



Results of 'Super Speeder' law: tougher charges, max fines

"Super speeders" kept prosecutors busy in the first year of Florida's new law that calls for misdemeanor charges for driving 50 mph over the speed limit or more than 100 mph in a way that endangers others.

Statistics for the State Attorney's Office for Brevard and Seminole counties as of July 1:

415 cases opened

- Brevard County: 238
- Seminole County: 177

Of 256 cases closed

- 223 defendants pled with cases resolved "as charged" for dangerous excessive speeding.
- 64 of those defendants were adjudicated guilty
- 159 had adjudication withheld by judges in exchange for conditions that typically included fines and completing the Florida Advanced Driver Improvement Course.
- 28 who were charged with dangerous excessive speeding had other resolutions, usually pleas to lesser charges that still brought a fine and the driving course.
- 5 cases were dropped by the State Attorney's Office for insufficient evidence.
- 0 defendants went to trial

Fines and penalties

Defendants consistently received the maximum fine of \$500 for first-time offenders plus more than \$300 in court costs and were ordered to complete the Florida Advanced Driver Improvement Course. The ADI course focuses heavily on psychology, behavior modification, and risk management rather than basic driving mechanics. Passing the course does not dismiss citations or delete points from defendants' records.



Driver charged with murder for Casselberry crash that killed two

The State Attorney's Office has filed two counts of second-degree murder against MARQUAVIOUS T. WHEATON, the driver who killed two brothers in a high-speed crash in Casselberry on July 7. Seminole County prosecutors will seek life sentences for Wheaton, 26, for actions that revealed a depraved mind and a corrupt disregard for the lives and safety of others.

"We want him off our streets and out of the community for good," said State Attorney William Scheiner. "He knowingly risked countless lives before ending two in the blink of an eye. The victims and their grieving families deserve our best effort at justice."

Evidence against Wheaton includes sheriff's helicopter video that shows him weaving through noon-hour traffic at 115 mph and running red lights on U.S. 17/92 before he broadsided an SUV carrying Christopher Marier, 42, and Tyler Marier, 40. Evidence also includes body camera video from first responders that shows Wheaton was the sole occupant of the speeding BMW sedan.



Wheaton

Father sentenced for fatal beating, abandonment of son

JASON D. GODLESKI has been sentenced to 38 years in prison for the brutal beating and neglect that killed his 12-year-old son, Noah, in their Palm Bay home. Godleski beat the boy with a baseball bat then left him locked in a laundry room in October 2021 while the rest of the family left the state on a road trip.

Godleski, 38, pled July 8 to charges including second-degree murder, aggravated child abuse, and neglect of a child with great bodily harm. Brevard County prosecutors Julia Lynch and Samantha Barrett were prepared to take Godleski to trial for first-degree murder and the child abuse charges.

Palm Bay Police investigators said Godleski forced Noah into the laundry room and beat him severely as a punishment for misbehaving. Instead of seeking medical care for his son, Godleski and his live-in girlfriend packed up their three other children and drove to Connecticut, leaving Noah alone and trapped. Prosecutors said Noah previously had been starved.

Man convicted for child porn

A Palm Bay man faces years in prison after Brevard County prosecutors convicted him at trial of possession of child pornography.

A jury found GUNNAR C. BESWICK, 30, guilty on July 20 of nine counts of possession of material depicting sexual conduct by a child based on evidence presented by prosecutors Pepper Worthy and Francis DeMuro. Nine photos obtained from Beswick's mobile phone showed prepubescent boys engaged in sex acts. Sentencing is Sept. 22.

"These are real children in these pictures," Worthy said. "Even though we can't identify them, they are real victims. We are trying to protect them and punish the people looking at them."