



MISSISSIPPIANS AGAINST
HUMAN TRAFFICKING

10 Phrases to Watch Out For After Natural Disasters

1. “I know a way you can make some quick cash.”

The phrase “quick cash” should always be a warning — these “opportunities” are often not what they seem – and may be dangerous or illegal. Be wary. Ask more questions. Try to verify through trusted sources. And if you’re hungry or need a safe place to stay, help may be available. You can call 211, a helpline that will connect you with support. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) also has a website here just to keep an eye on scams and rumors.

2. “Don’t want to stay at the shelter? We’ll take care of you.”

Before an emergency strikes, develop a safety plan so you don’t have to figure out what to do in a moment of chaos. The plan should include phone numbers and pre-arranged meeting places for trusted friends and family in case you get separated.

3. “We’ll hold your ID.”

There is no reason your employer needs to hold your documents, and this is a common approach traffickers use to control and exploit. If someone is pushy or demanding to hold your passport, visa, ID, or other documents, it’s a red flag.

4. “We’re looking for pretty girls who want to make quick money and get back on your feet after Hurricane _____.”

People looking to take advantage show up in vulnerable moments, like after a disaster. They know that people may have lost their jobs or need resources to help recover. It’s sexual exploitation if someone demands sex in exchange for food, water, or a place to stay. If someone is under the age of 18, or is being made to engage in commercial sex acts, including posing for nude photos or videos, through force, fraud or coercion, they are a victim of human trafficking.

5. “Can’t get in touch with family? I’ll help.”

It’s a good idea to memorize the phone numbers of three or four trusted friends (and if you are under 18, trusted adults) you can call in case of an emergency, so that you can call them even if your phone is stolen or out of power.

6. “Stop worrying. You’ll get paid.”

Know your rights: All workers, regardless of their immigration status, have rights. You have the right to minimum wage, getting paid overtime after working 40 hours per week, receiving your final payment within six days from your last day of work, getting bathroom breaks, working in a safe and healthy environment, receiving payments for work injuries if your employer has Workers Compensation, and being free from discrimination or harassment.

7. “You think I gave you all that help for nothing?”

Sometimes, after providing food and shelter to help someone in need, exploiters demand that their “generosity” be returned by forcing the person they “helped” to work under illegal conditions, to pose for nude photos, or have sex with strangers.

8. “We’ll take care of housing, transportation, and everything you need.”

Offers from scams and traffickers often seem “too good to be true.” Don’t let an employer take control over your whole life. While some legitimate jobs may come with offers of housing, being required to live where you are told may also be a warning sign of trafficking.

9. “We’re legit. Check out our website.”

Just because a job offer links to a flashy looking website doesn’t mean it’s for real. Some scammers even buy domain names and create websites as soon as storm names are announced! Look for jobs from trusted referrals and beware of job offers that sound too good to be true. If you’re being tricked into doing work or performing sex acts, this is human trafficking.

10. “If you don’t cooperate, I’ll”

Traffickers know how to take advantage. If you’re an undocumented worker, they’ll threaten to go to authorities. If you’ve shared personal information, they’ll blackmail. If they’re desperate, they may threaten you or your loved ones with violence. If you’re being forced or coerced to work or perform sex acts, this is human trafficking.

If you see one or several warning signs and suspect human trafficking activity, make an anonymous call to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center’s hotline. You can also text BeFree (233733).