Sep 25, 2026

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OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Attorney General James Uthmeier Files Consumer Protection Lawsuit Against Evolve Construction and Its Principals for Preying on Florida Hurricane Victims



Courtesy of the Office of the Attorney General

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. —Attorney General James Uthmeier filed a lawsuit against Evolve Construction, LLC, Evolve Construction & Restoration, Inc., and six principals and officers, alleging the companies and individuals used unfair, deceptive, and unconscionable practices to prey on Florida consumers who needed residential roof repair, roof replacement, and water and mold remediation after Hurricanes Ian and Milton.

“These companies knocked on doors after the storms, promised fast repairs, took insurance money, and left Florida families with unfinished homes and liens on their property,” **said Attorney General James Uthmeier**. “More than 60 percent of the consumers who complained to our office are seniors. The fraudsters should expect to be held accountable.”

“Our investigations and administrative prosecutions resulted in 12 final orders against Ahmed Darkawi, the loss of his license, and an opportunity for affected homeowners to help recover funds they lost,” **said Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation Secretary Melanie S. Griffin**. “We will continue working with Attorney General Uthmeier and our partners to pursue every action available under Florida law to prevent future victims, protect consumers, and safeguard the integrity of Florida’s construction industry.”

“Everybody has heard of storm chasers, but most homeowners have not heard of storm scammers,” **said William Webb, Chairman of the Florida Home Builder’s Association**. “These are the type of people that come in right after the storm claiming to be a contractor to help you out whether it’s your roof or other items that need attention. These scammers are out to take advantage of our uninformed homeowners that are already under duress from the storm. Don’t become a victim.”

The complaint, filed in the Twentieth Judicial Circuit in Lee County, alleges that the corporate defendants and the individual defendants operated as a common enterprise. At least 80 consumers from Lee, Charlotte, Sarasota, Hillsborough, Polk, Osceola, Manatee, Volusia, St. Lucie, St. Johns, and Broward Counties have filed complaints with the Attorney General’s Office. More than 60 percent of those consumers are seniors. Consumers alleged paying more than $1 million for work they did not receive as promised. Many insurance payments ranged from $5,000 to $80,000 per property, and the complaint alleges the defendants often collected those funds in full while leaving work unfinished or never started.

According to the complaint, the defendants solicited homeowners in their homes immediately after the storms, misrepresenting the quality and scope of the work and how quickly repairs would begin and be completed. Sales representatives who were not licensed contractors offered “free” roof inspections and held themselves out as “experts.” The complaint alleges those representatives never held the home-solicitation sale permits required by Florida law. They promised expedited permits, accelerated timelines, and the best possible insurance settlement—then, the State alleges, took consumers’ insurance benefits and failed to perform the work.

The complaint further alleges that defendants required consumers to sign an unconscionable “Contingency Agreement” that failed to provide a good-faith itemized estimate of costs, omitted cancellation language required by Florida law, imposed an unlawful cancellation penalty recharacterized as “liquidated damages,” and functioned as an unlawful assignment of insurance benefits.

When consumers tried to cancel or obtain refunds for work that was never performed, the defendants allegedly refused. Some consumers received only partial or poor-quality work that failed inspections and caused additional property damage.

The complaint alleges the defendants threatened to place liens on homes—and in some cases recorded liens, including for inaccurate amounts, and pursued foreclosure—even when no work was performed and no materials were purchased. Defendants also sent representatives to consumers’ homes to collect payments, leaving some consumers feeling physically threatened.

The corporate defendants are Evolve Construction, LLC, a Florida limited liability company organized in 2021 with its principal place of business in Naples, and Evolve Construction & Restoration, Inc., a Florida corporation formed in 2023, also based in Naples.

The individual defendants named in the complaint are:

- **Patrick Antoine** of Lee County, Florida, an authorized member of Evolve Construction, LLC and secretary of Evolve Construction & Restoration, Inc.;
- **Ahmed Darkawi** of Hennepin County, Minnesota, an original registered agent, authorized person, and former manager of Evolve Construction, LLC;
- **Jarret Gross** of Martin County, Florida, an authorized member of Evolve Construction, LLC;
- **Aleksandr Guldshtadt**, also known as Alex Gold, of Los Angeles County, California, former CEO of Evolve Construction & Restoration, Inc. and a former authorized member, registered agent, and manager of Evolve Construction, LLC;
- **John Vincent** of Los Angeles County, California, manager of Evolve Construction, LLC; and
- **Jaser "Jay" Zaabri** of Los Angeles County, California, a manager of Evolve Construction, LLC and chief financial officer of Evolve Construction & Restoration, Inc.

The lawsuit brings two counts under the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act: one against the corporate defendants for unfair, deceptive, or unconscionable practices in the marketing, sale, and provision of residential construction and restoration services, and one against the individual defendants for their direct participation in, knowledge of, and ability to control those practices.

Attorney General Uthmeier seeks an injunction to stop the alleged conduct, restitution to consumers, disgorgement of ill-gotten gains, civil penalties, and attorney's fees and costs.

Floridians who believe they were harmed by these companies or similar storm-repair contractors may file a complaint with the Attorney General's Office at MyFloridaLegal.com or by calling 1-866-9-NO-SCAM.

To read the complaint filed in the Twentieth Judicial Circuit, click here.

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