



# Public Service Announcement

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION



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## **TIPS ON AVOIDING FRAUDULENT CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTION SCHEMES**

Recently several natural disasters, including tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes, have devastated lives and property. In the wake of these events that have caused emotional distress and great monetary loss to numerous victims, individuals across the nation often feel a desire to help these victims, frequently through monetary donations.

These disasters prompt individuals with criminal intent to solicit contributions purportedly for a charitable organization or a good cause. Therefore, before making a donation of any kind, consumers should adhere to certain guidelines, to include the following:

- Do not respond to unsolicited (SPAM) e-mail.
- Be skeptical of individuals representing themselves as officials soliciting via e-mail for donations.
- Do not click on links contained within an unsolicited e-mail.
- Be cautious of e-mail claiming to contain pictures in attached files, as the files may contain viruses. Only open attachments from known senders.
- To ensure contributions are received and used for intended purposes, make contributions directly to known organizations rather than relying on others to make the donation on your behalf.
- Validate the legitimacy of the organization by directly accessing the recognized charity or aid organization's website rather than following an alleged link to the site.
- Attempt to verify the legitimacy of the non-profit status of the organization by using various Internet-based resources, which also may assist in confirming the actual existence of the organization.
- Do not provide personal or financial information to anyone who solicits contributions: providing such information may compromise your identity and make you vulnerable to identity theft.

To obtain more information on charitable contribution schemes and other types of online schemes, visit [www.LooksTooGoodToBeTrue.com](http://www.LooksTooGoodToBeTrue.com).

If you believe you have been a victim of a charity related scheme, contact the National Center for Disaster Fraud by telephone at (866) 720-5721, or by fax at (225) 334-4707, or by e-mail at [disaster@leo.gov](mailto:disaster@leo.gov).<sup>1</sup> You can also report suspicious e-mail solicitations or fraudulent websites to the Internet Crime Complaint Center at [www.IC3.gov](http://www.IC3.gov).

<sup>1</sup> National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) was originally established by the Department of Justice to investigate, prosecute, and deter fraud in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Its mission has expanded to include suspected fraud from any natural or man-made disaster. More than 20 federal agencies, including the FBI, participate in the NCDF, allowing it to act as a centralized clearinghouse of information related to relief fraud.