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National Center for Disaster Fraud to Coordinate Haitian Fraud Complaints

The FBI and the National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) have established a telephone hotline to report suspected Haitian earthquake relief fraud. The number is (866) 720-5721. The phone line is staffed by a live operator 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can also e-mail information directly to disaster@leo.gov.

The *National Center for Disaster Fraud* was originally established by the Department of Justice to investigate, prosecute, and deter fraud in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, when billions of dollars in federal disaster relief poured into the Gulf Coast region. 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 Haitian relief fraud.

The FBI continues to remind the public to apply a critical eye and do their due diligence before giving contributions to anyone soliciting donations on behalf of Haitian victims. Solicitations can originate from e-mails, websites, door-to-door collections, mailings and telephone calls, and similar methods.

Therefore, before making a donation of any kind, consumers should adhere to certain guidelines, including the following:

- Do not respond to unsolicited (spam) incoming e-mails, including clicking links contained within those messages.
- Be skeptical of individuals representing themselves as surviving victims or officials asking for donations via e-mail or social networking sites.
- Beware of organizations with copy-cat names similar to but not exactly the same as those of reputable charities.
- Rather than following a purported link to a website, verify the legitimacy of non-profit organizations by utilizing various Internet-based resources that may assist in confirming the group's existence and its non-profit status.
- Be cautious of e-mails that claim to show pictures of the disaster areas in attached files because 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.

- Do not be pressured into making contributions, as reputable charities do not use such tactics.
- Do not give your personal or financial information to anyone who solicits contributions. Providing such information may compromise your identity and make you vulnerable to identity theft.
- Avoid cash donations if possible. Pay by debit or credit card, or write a check directly to the charity. Do not make checks payable to individuals.

If you believe you have been a victim of fraud from someone or an organization soliciting relief on behalf Haitian earthquake victims, contact the National Center for Disaster Fraud at (866) 720-5721. You can also fax information to fax (225) 334-4707 or e-mail it to disaster@leo.gov. Anyone who has received an e-mail soliciting donations or is aware of fraudulent charity websites claiming to be collecting for Haitian victims, please notify the IC3 via www.ic3.gov.