



Public Service Announcement

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION



July 8, 2008

TIPS ON AVOIDING FRAUDULENT CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTION SCHEMES

Since late May and early June 2008, there have been several natural disasters throughout the country – including tornadoes, wildfires, and floods – which have devastated lives and property. In the wake of these events which 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.

Tragic incidents, such as 9/11, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and the recent earthquake in China, have prompted individuals with criminal intent to solicit contributions purportedly for a charitable organization and/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. If you are a victim of an online scheme, please notify the IC3 by filing a complaint at www.IC3.gov.