

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Disaster Relief Fraud

PULLMAN – The Pullman Police Department wishes to remind the public there is a potential for disaster fraud in the aftermath of a natural disaster. In the wake of natural disasters, many individuals feel moved to contribute to victim assistance programs and organizations across the country. We remind the public to apply a critical eye and do due diligence before giving to anyone soliciting donations on behalf of hurricane victims. Solicitations can originate as emails, websites, door-to-door collections, mailings, telephone calls and similar methods. Before making a donation of any kind, consumers should adhere to certain guidelines, including the following:

- Do not respond to any unsolicited (spam) incoming emails, including by clicking links contained within those messages, because they may contain computer viruses.
- Be cautious of individuals representing themselves as victims or officials asking for donations via email or social networking sites.
- Beware of organizations with copycat names similar to but not exactly the same as those of reputable charities.
- Rather than following a purported link to a website, verify the existence and legitimacy of non-profit organizations by using Internet-based resources.
- Be cautious of emails that claim to show pictures of the disaster areas in attached files, because those files may contain viruses. Only open attachments from known senders.
- To ensure that contributions are received and used for intended purposes, make donations directly to known organizations rather than relying on others to make the donation on your behalf.
- Do not be pressured into making contributions; reputable charities do not use coercive 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.
- Legitimate charities do not normally solicit donations via money transfer services.
- Most legitimate charities maintain websites ending in .org rather than .com.

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If you believe that you have been a victim of fraud by a person or organization soliciting relief funds on behalf of hurricane victims, contact the National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) hotline at 866-720-5721, fax at (225) 334-4707, or email at disaster@leo.gov . The hotline is staffed by a live operator 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for the purpose of reporting suspected scams being perpetrated by criminals in the aftermath of disasters. You can also report suspicious e-mail solicitations or fraudulent websites to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at www.ic3.gov

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