



NEWS FROM SCDCA

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Carri Grube Lybarker, Administrator

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Contact: Juliana Harris, (803) 734-4296

Scam Alert: Beware of Fraudulent Charities in Wake of Hurricane Harvey

COLUMBIA, S.C. – In response to the devastation from Hurricane Harvey, many South Carolinians are searching for ways to help victims. The SC Department of Consumer Affairs is advising consumers to be on the lookout for fake charities. Here are a few tips to ensure donations get to those in need:

- **Seek out a charity.** Be cautious of groups that approach you. Obtain information on a particular charity by visiting the SC Secretary of State's website at http://www.sos.sc.gov/Public_Charities or by calling 803-734-1790.
- **Donate to well-known charities.** Watch out for charities that have sprung up overnight. Do not assume a charity is legitimate based on its name. Some phony charities use names similar to those of respected, legitimate organizations.
- **Know who's calling.** During a call, a professional solicitor must disclose:
 - that they are a paid solicitor.
 - the name, location and purpose of the charity.
 - the registered, true name of the professional fundraising organization for which they work.
- **Know where the money is going.** Ask what percentage of your contribution goes to the charitable cause. Find out their mission and history. Don't be afraid to ask for details in writing.
- **Do not provide personal or financial information to cold callers.** This includes your Social Security number, credit card and bank account numbers. Scam artists can use this information to commit fraud. When in doubt, hang up!
- **Do not give or send cash.** For security and tax record purposes, contribute by check or credit card. Write the official name of the charity on your check.

About SCDCA

The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs aims to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, complaint mediation, enforcement and education. To file a complaint or get information on consumer issues, visit www.consumer.sc.gov or call toll-free, (800) 922-1594.