

SPOTLIGHT: Charity Scams

KNOW WHO YOU ARE GIVING TO.

Don't let scammers profit off your generosity.



AVOIDING SCAMS

- **Be wary of requests for unusual forms of payment.** Do not make donations using prepaid debit cards, gift cards, wire or bank transfer. Once in the hands of a scam artist, the money is gone and difficult to trace.
- **Don't give out personal information to someone soliciting a donation.** Personal information can be as valuable as cash to a criminal, who may try to convince you to part with credit card or bank account data, phone numbers, addresses, and more.
- **Don't assume solicitations on social media or crowdfunding sites are legitimate.** Some scammers hijack links to legitimate sites while others may misappropriate donated funds.
- **Be careful of charities that pressure you to donate quickly.** Ask any cold-caller to send you information about the charity through the mail.



CHECK OUT CHARITIES BEFORE DONATING

- **Scammers can create fake charities to trick people out of donations.** Look out for charities with names that sound like famous charities but are not. Go to the SC Secretary of State's [website](#) to see if the charity is registered. You can also call 1 (888) 242-7484.
- **Research charities online using words like "scam" and "complaint."** You can also check a charity's ratings with the [BBB Wise Giving Alliance](#), [Charity Navigator](#), [Charity Watch](#), and [Guidestar](#).
- **Use the [IRS's Tax Exempt Organization Search](#) to see if your donation is tax-deductible.**



GENERAL TIPS

- **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 that sound or look like those of respected, legitimate organizations.
- **Know where your money is going.** Ask what percentage of your contribution goes to the cause. Find out their mission and history. Do not be afraid to ask for details in writing.
- **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.

TO REPORT A SCAM

- Call the SC Secretary of State's Division of Public Charities at 1 (888) 242-7484.
- File a confidential complaint online with the SC Secretary of State using their [Charitable Solicitation Complaint Form](#).
- Call SCDCA's Identity Theft Unit at 1 (844) 835-5322 or visit consumer.sc.gov and click the Identity Theft Unit tab.