



U.S. Department of Justice Federal Bureau of Investigation

**For Immediate Release
January 15, 2010**

**Washington D.C.
FBI National Press Office
(202) 324-3691
www.fbi.gov**

Haitian Earthquake Relief Fraud Alert

Disasters bring out the best in people during tragic events. Many people volunteer to assist victims and others are willing to make contributions to charities. Disasters also bring out the worst in people, particularly those who desire to benefit from the charity of others. The FBI reminds the public they should apply a critical eye and do their due diligence before giving contributions to anyone soliciting on behalf of the Haitian victims. Solicitations can originate from e-mails, Internet Websites, door-to-door collections, mailings, telephone calls, and other similar methods.

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

- 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, in person or social networking sites.
- Beware of organizations with copy-cat names that are similar to those of reputable charities, but are not exactly the same.
- Verify the legitimacy of nonprofit organizations by utilizing various Internet-based resources that may assist in confirming the group's existence and its nonprofit status rather than following a purported link to the site.
- 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.
- Make contributions directly to known organizations rather than relying on others to make the donation on your behalf to ensure contributions are received and used for intended purposes.
- Do not be pressured into giving contributions. Legitimate organizations do not use these methods.
- 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 a credit card or write a check to the charity. Do not write checks to individuals.

If you believe you have been a victim of fraud from someone or an organization who was soliciting on behalf of Haitian victims, contact the National Center for Disaster Fraud at (866) 720-5721, fax (225) 334-4707 or e-mail 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.