



News

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BBB – Rockford Regional Office

Rockford, IL 61101

815.963.2226

815.323.8419 (cell)

815.963.0329 (fax)

www.bbb.org

Contact: Dennis Horton

BBB - Rockford Regional Office

dhorton@chicago.bbb.org

Donors and Consumers Advised to Give and Purchase Carefully Following Natural Disasters

ROCKFORD, IL - August 30, 2016 -Natural disasters have been dominating headlines including extensive flooding in Louisiana, earthquakes in Italy and Myanmar, and wildfires in the western United States. These tragedies have been the cause of hundreds of deaths, and massive destruction. As devastating as these incidents are, they without fail, bring out the best in people who immediately want to help. However, the Better Business Bureau (BBB) warns, there is also the sad realization that for all the good that will be done, there are individuals who will seek to profit by scamming those who are trying to help.

"We see this happen during every national and international, natural disaster and human crisis," said Dennis Horton, director of the Rockford Regional Office of the Better Business Bureau. "We can't stress enough, that it's very important to take your time and do your research before donating to relief efforts."

Scam artists use sophisticated fundraising ideas and can often expertly imitate real nonprofits leading concerned individuals to donate to their fake operations. These charity scams take many forms, including emails containing links or attachments that direct users to phishing or malware-infected websites.

Horton notes, "When they get a victim, social media-savvy con artist can build on the victim's mistake by making that person's friends aware of the donations; the scammer then lulls new victims into trusting the fake charity that their friend supports.

Whether you are donating to help the flood and fire victims or those effected by the earthquakes the BBB suggest that donors keep the following tips in mind to help avoid questionable appeals for support:

Find out if the charity has an on-the-ground presence in the impacted areas. See if the charity's website clearly describes what the charity can do to address immediate needs.

Find out if the charity is providing direct aid or raising money for other groups.

Some charities may be raising money to pass along to relief organizations. If so, you may want to consider "avoiding the middleman" and giving directly to those work in the region.

Gifts of clothing, food or other in-kind donations. In-kind drives for food and clothing, while well intentioned, may not necessarily be the quickest way to help those in need - unless the organization has the staff and infrastructure to distribute such aid properly.

Understand crowdfunding. Keep in mind that some crowdfunding sites do very little vetting of individuals who decide to post for assistance after a disaster.

The BBB Wise Giving Alliance has a [list of organizations](#) helping victims of these disasters.

Consumers Urged to Always User Reputable Dealers to Avoid FLOOD DAMAGED VEHICLES

In the wake of the floods consumers also need to watch out for flood damaged vehicles. The BBB advises while most auto dealers are legitimate, there are some unscrupulous businesses and individuals who may try to sell flood-damaged cars without revealing the cars true history.

In the months to come consumers need to exercise extra caution, especially when purchasing from individuals, or second-tier used car lots or social media sites such as Craigslist. To decrease chances of buying a flood-damaged car, follow these tips:

- Deal only with reputable dealers - Check Business Grades of all dealers and area businesses for free at www.ask.bbb.org or www.bbb.org/chicago
- Check for musty or damp odors
- New carpeting should be pulled back to check for mud, dirt and water stains
- Look under the dash for dirt or mud
- Check all electronic components - an early sign of damaged cars from flooding is often detected in the wiring.
- Always have your next car checked by an auto technician to check for corrosion or other water damage signs. If a car sounds too good to be true - let the buyer beware and think about your recourse if there are problems.

For more important consumer information AT NO COST visit www.ask.bbb.org, also like us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/bbb), follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/bbb) and add us on [Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com/bbb).

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