



CONSUMER NEWS

SAN DIEGO CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Japan Relief Charity Scams

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The catastrophic earthquake and tsunami in Japan in March left thousands missing or dead and compelled millions all over the world to open their hearts and wallets to help.

Yet, in the wake of this tragedy, there is another worry: scam relief charities preying on your pocketbook and generosity. This month's edition of Consumer News will give you guidelines and tips to make sure your donations actually go to those in need.

**BEFORE YOU WRITE
A CHECK, CHECK
THE CHARITY!**

DO THE INITIAL RESEARCH:

Check these websites:

California Attorney General

- <http://oag.ca.gov/charities>

Allows donors to check a charity's registration status and view public financial reports.

Note: The registry cannot tell you if a charity is legitimate or if the donations are used effectively. It only reveals

whether the charity is registered and making the required financial disclosures.

Better Business Bureau

- www.bbb.org/charity

Allows donors to research charities and relief organizations to verify their BBB accreditation and ensure they meet the 20 Standards for Charity Accountability.

IRS

- www.irs.gov/charities/article/0,,id=96136,00.html

Allows donors to check whether the charity can represent that donations are tax deductible.

Ask to see the charity's pamphlets and flyers. Also, do your online research and check out any information the charity has online, including their website. The more information that is out there about the charity, the more informed decision you can make.

If you receive a solicitation email with a link or see an advertisement link on a website, do not click on the link. Instead, search the charity's name on a search engine.

Remember, a legitimate nonprofit charity's website will end in ".org", not ".com."

BEFORE YOU GIVE:

After you've checked out the charity, there are still some precautions you should take before you give:

- Ask for the name of the charity if the telemarketer doesn't immediately provide it.
- Ask what percentage of the donation goes directly to the cause.
- Do not provide any credit card or bank information until you have reviewed all information about the charity and have made an informed decision.
- Ask for a receipt showing the amount of the contribution and stating that it is tax deductible.
- Make checks payable to the beneficiary, not the solicitor; and
- Avoid cash gifts.

