



For Your Information: 10/31/2012

FTC Warns Consumers: Charity and Home Repair Scams May Appear After a Disaster

In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, the Federal Trade Commission reminds consumers that scams often follow disasters. The nation's consumer protection agency warns people about urgent appeals for charitable donations, and cautions residents in stricken areas about fraudulent home repair offers.

If you are asked to make a charitable donation to help people in disaster-affected areas, consider these tips to giving wisely:

- Donate to charities you know and trust. Be alert for charities that seem to have sprung up overnight.
- Ask if the caller is a paid fundraiser, who they work for, and what percentage of your donation goes to the charity and to the fundraiser. If you don't get a clear answer — or if you don't like the answer you get — consider donating to a different organization.
- Do not give out personal or financial information – including your credit card or bank account number – unless you know the charity is reputable.
- Never send cash: you can't be sure the organization will receive your donation, and you won't have a record for tax purposes.
- Check out a charity before you donate. Contact the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance at www.give.org.

Fraudsters target disaster-affected areas, hoping to cash in on property owners' insurance settlements and financial relief from the federal government. Home and business owners who need to hire a contractor should:

Ask for copies of the contractor's general liability and worker's compensation insurance.

- Check the contractor's identification and references.
- Avoid paying more than the minimum in advance.
- Deal with reputable people in your community.
- Call local law enforcement and the Better Business Bureau if you suspect a con.

For more information, see [Disaster Recovery](#), [Charity Fraud](#), [Charity Checklist](#), and [Charitable Donations: Give or Take?](#)

The Federal Trade Commission works for consumers to prevent fraudulent, deceptive, and unfair business practices and to provide information to help spot, stop, and avoid them. To file a complaint in English or Spanish, visit the FTC's online [Complaint Assistant](#) or call 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357). The FTC enters complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to more than 2,000 civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad. The FTC's website provides [free information on a variety of consumer topics](#). Like the FTC on [Facebook](#), follow us on [Twitter](#), and [subscribe to press releases](#) for the latest FTC news and resources.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Office of Public Affairs

202-326-2180