

FTC Consumer Alert

Federal Trade Commission ■ Bureau of Consumer Protection ■ Office of Consumer and Business Education

Helping Victims of the Terrorist Attacks: Your Guide to Giving Wisely

In the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Americans are opening their hearts and wallets to help the nation recover. If you're thinking about donating to the cause, here are some tips to help you give wisely:

- ◆ Donate to recognized charities you have given to before. Watch out for similar sounding names. Some phony charities use names that sound or look like those of respected, legitimate organizations.
- ◆ Give directly to the charity, not solicitors for the charity. That's because solicitors take a portion of the proceeds to cover their costs. That leaves less for the victims.
- ◆ Do not give out personal or financial information – including your Social Security number or credit card and bank account numbers – to anyone who solicits a contribution from you. Scam artists use this information to commit fraud against you.
- ◆ Check out charities. Contact the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance: 4200 Wilson Blvd, Suite 800, Arlington, VA 22203; (703) 276-0100; www.give.org.
- ◆ Don't give cash. For security and tax record purposes, pay by check. Write the official name of the charity on your check. Or you can contribute safely online through www.libertyunites.org.
- ◆ Ask for identification if you're approached in person. Many states require paid fundraisers to identify themselves as such and to name the charity for which they're soliciting.

To report a fraud, contact the Federal Trade Commission toll-free: 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357) or use the complaint form at www.ftc.gov. The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop and avoid them. The FTC enters Internet, telemarketing, identity theft and other fraud related complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.