



State of Wisconsin
Governor Scott Walker

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
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Department of Financial Institutions
Lon E. Roberts, Secretary



DATCP/DFI NEWS RELEASE: Fake Charities: Don't Let Scammers Bank on Your Goodwill

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MADISON – In the spirit of the season, many consumers give generously to charities over the holidays. But while they are looking to share, scammers are looking to steal through fake charities with high-pressure pitches. This holiday season, two state agencies ask consumers to do their research on charities before making a contribution and to be leery of pushy phone- and internet-based requests for payments.

“Scammers see your goodwill as an opening to get into your wallet,” said Frank Frassetto, Division Administrator of Trade and Consumer Protection for the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). “Be suspicious of aggressive, out-of-the-blue requests for donations and always take the time to learn more about a charity before making a payment.”

Before donating, check with DATCP about any consumer complaints on file against the organization and check to see if the charity is registered with the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions (DFI).

“When consumers are making a decision to donate, they want to make sure that a high percentage of that donation is actually going to the service that is to be provided,” said Mary Ann McCoshen, Administrator of the DFI’s Division of Corporate and Consumer Services. “It’s easy to check out how a particular charity allocates their donations to programs by looking into their spending levels on the DFI website at www.wdfi.org/CharitableOrganizations.”

DATCP and DFI offer up these tips for donors considering a contribution to a charitable organization:

- If contacted by phone, avoid being pressured to make an immediate donation. Don’t hesitate to ask the caller to send you information about the organization and its programs.
- Ask a solicitor to explain the purpose of the organization, what services are provided, how much of the donation goes to fund-raising expenses, whether the donation is tax-deductible, and whether you will be sent a receipt.
- Donate to charities that you trust and are well-established.

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- To trick consumers into making donations, scammers will often use names and websites that are similar to those of better-known, reputable organizations. Watch the spelling of the charity's name and web address (URL) closely.
- Be wary of unsolicited requests for donations, especially ones received via the Internet.
- Criminals know that many people make year-end charitable contributions for tax purposes, so they may take a tax-related angle in pitching their scam.
- Never write out a check or give cash to an individual solicitor. Write out checks to the name of the organization or use a credit card.

For more information or to file a complaint, consumers may contact:

- DATCP on the web at datcp.wi.gov; by phone (Consumer Protection Hotline) at 800-422-7128; by e-mail at datcphotline@wisconsin.gov; or at www.facebook.com/wiconsumer.
- DFI on the web at www.wdfi.org/CharitableOrganizations; by phone at 800-452-3328; or by e-mail at DFISecretary@wisconsin.gov.

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