

## Don't Be Scammed By Fake Charities

### Article Highlights:

- Scammers and charitable contributions
- How to check on legitimate charities
- Disaster scammers

As the end of the year approaches, you will probably be besieged by requests from charitable organizations for contributions. The holiday season is the favorite time of the year for charities to solicit donations.

But you should be aware that it is also the time of year when scammers show up in force, pretending to be legitimate charities in hopes of deceiving you into giving them your hard-earned money.

When making a donation, you should take a few extra minutes to ensure your gifts are going to legitimate charities. [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov) has a search feature, Exempt Organizations [Select Check](#), which allows people to find legitimate, qualified charities to which donations may be tax-deductible.

Here are some tips to make sure your contributions are going to legitimate charities.

- Be wary of charities with names that are similar to familiar or nationally known organizations. Some phony charities use names or websites that sound or look like those of respected, legitimate organizations.
- Don't give out personal financial information, such as Social Security numbers or passwords, to anyone who solicits a contribution from you. Scam artists may use this information to steal your identity and money. Using a credit card to make legitimate donations is quite common, but please be very careful when you are speaking with someone who called you; don't give out your credit card number unless you are certain the caller represents a legal charity.
- Don't give or send cash. For security and tax record purposes, contribute by check or credit card or another way that provides documentation of the gift.

Another long-standing type of abuse or fraud involves scams that occur in the wake of significant natural disasters. In the aftermath of major disasters, it's common for scam artists to impersonate charities to get money or private information from well-intentioned taxpayers. Scam artists can use a variety of tactics. Some scammers operating bogus charities may contact people by telephone or email to solicit money or financial information and may set up phony websites that claim to solicit funds on behalf disaster victims. Unscrupulous individuals may even directly contact disaster victims and claim to be working for or on behalf of the IRS to help the victims file casualty loss claims to get tax refunds.

Scammers may also attempt to get personal financial information or Social Security numbers that can be used to steal the victims' identities or financial resources. Disaster victims with specific questions about tax relief or disaster-related tax issues may call a special IRS toll-free disaster assistance telephone number (1-866-562-5227) for information.

Don't be scammed; make sure you are donating to recognized charities. Deductions to charities that are not legitimate are not tax deductible. If you have questions, please give this office a call.