



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **ATTORNEY GENERAL RAVNSBORG ADVISES TO BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR DISASTER-RELATED CHARITY SCAMS**

**PIERRE, S.D.** – With the recent weather damage and flooding occurring in neighboring states, Attorney General Jason Ravensborg reminds South Dakotans to use care and caution in donating to relief efforts and to avoid charity scams.

“As South Dakotans we are proud to stand up and aid our neighbors in times of crisis,” said Ravensborg. “Unfortunately not everyone sees this as a time to help, instead they see a chance to profit and it is my duty to help South Dakotans recognize and avoid these fundraising scams aimed at playing off our natural empathy.”

Following a few simple steps can help ensure that your donations reach those in need:

- It is best to donate to organizations whose reputations you are familiar with and those having a local presence.
- Be cautious about fundraising efforts initiated on social media with no known ties to an established organization or local charity.
- Evaluate the charity before making a donation. Resources such as Charity Navigator, GuideStar, IRS Select Check, the National Center for Charitable Statistics and the BBB Wise Giving Alliance all provide information about established charities.
- Designate the disaster so you may ensure your funds are going to disaster relief, rather than a general fund.
- Don't fall for imposters. Watch out for charities with names that sound similar to well-known organizations. Sometimes these sound-alike names are designed to confuse donors. If you receive an email, telephone call or text message asking for a donation, confirm that the request is from the charity, and not an imposter, by contacting the charity or visiting its website before making the donation.
- Avoid cash donations if possible. Pay by credit card or write a check directly to the charity. Do not make checks payable to individuals or send money via money transfer.
- Be especially wary of unsolicited emails that contain attachments or links to websites, as they may download harmful malware onto your computer.

- Be cautious when donating to a recently formed charity. These organizations have less experience handling donations, especially those intended to assist with a natural disaster.
- Ask questions. Contact the charity to ask how your donation will be used for disaster relief. If they cannot give you answers, consider donating elsewhere.
- Use peer-to-peer fundraising platforms carefully. Watch for hidden fees and make sure you know how your personal information may be used after you donate. When possible, make your donation payable to a charitable organization and not a specific person.
- Get permission and all the details before raising money on behalf of a charity or individual. Contact the charity or individual beforehand to get permission and determine how and where donations should be sent. This also will provide you with an opportunity to confirm that any representations you'll be making are truthful.

Those who suspect a charity scam should contact the Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General at (605) 773-4400, or 1-800-300-1986 (in-state only), or by email at [consumerhelp@state.sd.us](mailto:consumerhelp@state.sd.us)

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