



DAYTONA BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

Michael J. Chitwood, Chief of Police



Holiday Donations Are Up and So Are Charity Scams

The holidays are known as “the giving season.” It is a time when the amount of donations to charities and organizations increase. People are often more soft-hearted about giving during the holidays than any other time of year. Donations range from clothing, money, and sometimes even property. While donating is a great way to give back, donors should use caution when deciding to whom and what to donate. The holiday season is a time when criminals prey on the generosity of donors. Charity scams are the highest during this season. Criminals use this opportunity to set up money scams and even fake charities, leaving donors clueless and resulting in lost profit for a charity in need.

Here are five ways to avoid charity scams this holiday season:

- **Research the charity-** Be sure that it is a charity that you can trust or a charity that is familiar to you. Consider asking friends and family for suggestions, but still do your homework by calling or checking out the website. Look for past accomplishments and years in business. The larger the donation, the longer you should think about it before transferring funds to a charity
- **Don't give in to pressure to give on the spot-** Do not give on the spot, whether it is by phone, with a credit card, or a runner coming to get the donation. The charity that needs your gift today will welcome it tomorrow. Ask for a pledge card instead, this will give you time to do your research.
- **Never give out credit card information over the phone-** If a solicitor claims that the charity will support a local organization that you are familiar with, this is not a green light to give all of your information. Do not give your credit card or any other banking information over the phone. Call the charity in question directly to verify the claim. Phony charities will use familiar names of charities that are located in the area code that donors are calling from so that it appears that contributions are going to support local causes. People like to help their neighbors, especially during the holidays, and scam artists won't hesitate to exploit a donor's kindness.
- **Make your monetary contributions by check-** When giving a monetary donation, use a check instead of cash. This is the most secure method of tracking your donations. Be sure to make your checks payable to the charity and not to an individual.
- **Check the IRS and Better Business Bureau-** Most states require charities to register and file annual reports showing how they use donations. Ask your state or local consumer protection agency how to get this information. The Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance also offers information about national charities. You can check www.give.org for more information.

Sponsored by the Daytona Beach Police Department and the National Crime Prevention Council

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