

BBB Warns of Tornado Charity Scams

Local News

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DuPont, Wash. – In the wake of the massive tornados that touched down in Oklahoma this week, Better Business Bureau (BBB), the Washington State Attorney General's Office (AGO) and the Secretary of State (SOS) are warning of opportunistic fraudsters. Cons follow the headlines and can easily create bogus charities under the guise of helping victims.“Our thoughts and prayers are with all of those affected by this disaster,” said Robert W.G. Andrew, CEO of BBB serving Alaska, Oregon and Western Washington. “Everyone wants to do their part to help, but without being careful a meaningful donation can easily end up in the wrong hands.” Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson joins the BBB in cautioning donors to exercise restraint before sending money.“I join the Better Business Bureau in expressing sympathy to the families who've lost loved ones or their homes in this disaster,” said Attorney General Bob Ferguson. “I know many share my concerns and want to provide assistance right away—but it is important to exercise caution and make sure your money helps those who truly need it.”

Secretary of State Kim Wyman also recommends exercising caution when donating funds. “Our hearts go out to the families, friends and neighbors of those who died or were injured in the tornado in Oklahoma,” said Secretary of State Kim Wyman. “I'm sure that a number of Washingtonians will be stepping forward to contribute to the relief effort and to help the victims of this tragedy. “As the Attorney General and I continue to underscore, it is important that donors use their heads, as well as their hearts, in responding. Sadly, there will always be rip-off artists looking to line their pockets, so we urge donors to use caution in making decisions about where to contribute their hard-earned money.” BBB, the AG and SOS advise consumers to be mindful of certain red flags before making donations. Be suspicious of solicitors requesting immediate donations. Don't rush decisions and consider contributing at give.org, a website run by the Council of Better Business Bureaus. Make sure that charities are qualified to provide the type of disaster relief that is necessary. Avoid cash donations. Write a check directly to the charity, not the fundraiser. Never give out credit card numbers over the phone. Be wary of “new” charities with unverifiable background information. Watch out for solicitations from fake “victim” or memorial social media accounts. Don't be fooled by a name. Be watchful of charities that use sympathetic sounding names or names similar to well-known legitimate charities. The Better Business Bureau, the Washington Attorney General and Secretary of State advise consumers to contact potential charities directly. For more information on finding charities, visit [BBB's charity review](#) or the [SOS charity lookup](#). Consumers can also visit the SOS web site for tips on [giving wisely](#). ###**Better Business Bureau serving Alaska, Oregon and Western Washington:** BBB's mission is to advance marketplace trust. BBB is a neutral not-for-profit organization that helps consumers find businesses, brands and charities they can trust. For more information on ethical business standards, BBB Accreditation, BBB Business Reviews, Charity Reviews, complaints, events and anti-fraud tips, [contact BBB](#) or visit bbb.org.