



Special Report on Possible Fraud Schemes - Solicitations of Donations for Victims of Terrorist Attacks

In the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, consumer groups and members of the public have reported receiving unsolicited e-mail messages, which urge people to donate money to the Red Cross or to funds for victims of the attacks and their families. Some of these e-mails are being sent by people with a sincere desire to help, and contain accurate information. Others, however, have tried to persuade people to leave valuable personal or financial data, such as credit-card numbers, at Internet Websites that do not belong to legitimate charitable organizations. In addition, some reports indicate that telemarketers operating fraudulent "sweepstakes" or magazine-subscription schemes may be falsely promising consumers that a portion of their money will be provided to the disaster recovery efforts.

It is a federal crime for anyone to falsely or fraudulently hold himself or herself out as, or represent or pretend himself or herself to be, a member of or an agent for the American National Red Cross for the purpose of soliciting, collecting, or receiving money or material (18 U.S.C. § 917). It is a federal felony for anyone to engage in mail fraud, wire fraud, or credit-card fraud (18 U.S.C. §§ 1341, 1343, 1029). Punishment for these types of felonies can range as high as 15 years imprisonment, or as high as 25 years imprisonment where the fraud is in connection with the conduct of telemarketing. In addition, fraudulent solicitations for supposedly charitable causes may violate other federal or state consumer protection laws.

Members of the public should act cautiously before sending money or giving their credit-card information or personal data, such as passwords or Social Security numbers, over the telephone or the Internet to people soliciting them for donations for disaster relief. Legitimate charitable causes, such as those listed below, do not need to telephone or e-mail you to solicit donations for the victims, or to obtain your passwords or Social Security numbers to accept your donations. If you have any concerns about sending money to a particular organization, do not hesitate to call that organization directly and ask for more information, and consult the state attorney general for your state.

To report possible fraudulent schemes relating to victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks, please e-mail your information immediately to the Federal Trade Commission at <http://www.ftc.gov/sentinel/> or call 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357) (TTY/TDD 202-326-2502) to reach the FTC's Consumer Response Center. (Crime information about the September 11 attacks should be directed to <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/consumer.shtm> or 1-866-483-5137.) The FTC works closely with the Department of Justice and other federal and state law enforcement agencies on consumer fraud issues, and will make your reports available to law enforcement. To learn more about Internet fraud, or to contact law enforcement, please consult the following Websites:

- . U.S. Department of Justice - <http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/fraud/>

- . Federal Bureau of Investigation:

 - . Field Offices - <http://www.fbi.gov/contact/fo/fo.htm>

 - . Internet Fraud Complaint Center - <http://www.ic3.gov/default.aspx>

- . U.S. Postal Inspection Service:

 - . Locator for Postal Inspection Service Offices -

<http://www.usps.com/ncsc/locators/find-is.html>

. Federal Trade Commission:

- . Regional Offices - <http://www.ftc.gov/ro/index.shtml>
- . Consumer Fraud Materials - <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/>

. National Association of Attorneys General:

- . List of State Attorneys General - http://www.naag.org/attorneys_general.php

For additional information concerning recognized government and charitable organizations that are accepting donations for victims of the attacks, please consult the following:

. Donations for Firefighters, Police, and Rescue Workers The American Liberty Partnership's Website, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/partner.html>, lists numerous charities for donations. The New York City Fire Department is referring individuals who want to make contributions to New York Firefighters 9-11 Disaster Relief Fund, c/o International Association of Fire Fighters, 1750 New York Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20006 (202-737-8484), and to the Widows' and Children's Fund, c/o Uniformed Firefighters Association, 204 East 23rd Street, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10010 (212-683-4832), <http://ufalocal94.org/>. Other recognized funds for the benefit of victims include:

- . September 11th Fund, a joint project of the United Way of New York and the New York Community Trust (1-800-710-8002 for pledges), <http://ufalocal94.org/funds/scholar.php>
- . New York State World Trade Center Relief Fund, P.O. Box 5028, Albany, New York 12205 (800-801-8092 for credit-card donations, or 518-408-4992 for international donors), http://www.oag.state.ny.us/media_center/2001/oct/oct25a_01.html
- . New York State Fraternal Order of Police WTC Police Disaster Relief Fund, 911 Police Plaza, Hicksville, NY 11801 (516-433-4455), <http://www.nysfop.org/>

. Donations to Red Cross The American Red Cross's Website is <http://www.redcross.org/>.

. Other Information Websites with additional information relating to disaster relief include the following:

- . Office for Victims of Crime, Department of Justice, Victims and Family Assistance Website - <http://ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/familycallcenter.htm>
- . Federal Emergency Management Agency - <http://www.fema.gov/>
- . New York Times, Resource Locator - <http://www.nytimes.com/national/resources/index.html#emergency>
- . Washington Post, How You Can Help - <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A25271-2001Sep13.html>

Note: All Web sites to which these pages cross-link are included as a service for the public. Cross-links to non-governmental sites do not constitute an endorsement or approval of their content, or of the organizations responsible for that content, by the Department of Justice.

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Source: Fraud Section, Criminal Division, U.S. Department of Justice
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