



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS
Office of Consumer Protection

DCCA News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 2, 2005

STATE WARNS RESIDENTS TO BE WARY OF POSSIBLE HURRICANE KATRINA SCAMS

HONOLULU -- The Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs' Office of Consumer Protection is warning residents to beware of scam artists who may be soliciting charitable contributions for victims of Hurricane Katrina.

"Unfortunately, each time there is a disaster scam artists seem to crawl out from wherever they are hiding and try to exploit caring citizens who want to help those in need," warned OCP Executive Director Stephen Levins. "These individuals will prey on the public's generosity to obtain money for themselves by falsely claiming that funds collected will assist victims of the hurricane."

OCP says a good way to ensure that your charitable contribution goes for its intended purpose is to direct your donations only to organizations that you know and trust. Here are some tips to avoid con artists:

- Do not give any money to someone with whom you are unfamiliar.
- Do not respond to any online scams, such as unsolicited emails asking for donations.
- Go directly to a reputable organization's website, or call the organization directly to make your pledge.
- Choose charities with a proven track record of disaster relief work. (Charities such as the American Red Cross, United Way and the Salvation Army are examples of organizations that have experience in helping communities recover from disasters).
- Be on the lookout for solicitations from professional telemarketers. (Telemarketing firms keep most of the money they raise and give only a small portion of the money to charity. Instead, individuals should send their donations directly to a charity).

“This is definitely a time for all of us to help the victims of this disaster, but be careful when giving,” said DCCA Director Mark Recktenwald. “Take the time to make sure that your donation goes to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina, and not to the scam artists.”

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