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MEDIA ALERT

Consumer Protection joins Federal Trade Commission "Operation False Charity"

"Federal Trade Commission launches nationwide law enforcement sweep against charity scams"

(For immediate release...)

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah - Francine A. Giani, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Commerce, announced today that the Division of Consumer Protection is participating in a federal-state crackdown on fraudulent charitable fundraisers and charities claiming to help police, firefighters, and veterans. The Division joined the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), Attorneys General, Secretaries of State, 48 states and the District of Columbia today to launch "Operation False Charity." Federal and state enforcers announced 76 actions against 32 fund raising companies, 31 individuals and 22 non-profits or those who claimed to be non-profits in order to solicit funds. While Utah does not have any pending enforcement actions against these types of charitable organizations and fundraisers, the Division of Consumer Protection's aim is to help educate consumers by focusing on this type of fraud through "Operation False Charity".

"Charity fraud is often a silent scam where consumers hear a pitch, send a check and never really know what happens to their money," said Francine A. Giani, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Commerce, "We want Utah consumers to protect their hard earned money from charities who cheat to ensure their donations are really helping those in need."

Tips on Giving Wisely

The following tips will help consumers ensure their donations go to a legitimate charity;

1. Recognize that the words "veterans" or "military families" in an organization's name don't necessarily mean that veterans or the families of active-duty personnel will benefit from your donation.
2. Donate to charities with a track record and a history. Charities that spring up overnight may disappear just as quickly.
3. If you have any doubt about whether you've made a pledge or a contribution, check your records. If you don't remember making the donation or pledge, resist the pressure to give.
4. Check out an organization before donating. Some phony charities use names, seals and logos that look or sound like those of respected, legitimate organizations.

5. Call the Utah Division of Consumer Protection at (801) 530-6601 to see whether the charity or fundraising organization has to be registered in Utah.
6. Do not send or give cash donations. For security and tax record purposes, it's best to pay by check made payable to the charity.
7. Ask for a receipt showing the amount of your contribution.
8. Be wary of promises of guaranteed sweepstakes winnings in exchange for a contribution. You never have to give a donation to be eligible to win a sweepstakes.

Additional Resources for Consumers

www.consumerprotection.utah.gov - Lookup registered charities and non-profits in Utah

www.guidestar.org - Guidestar

www.bbb.us/charity - Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance

www.charitynavigator.org - Charity Navigator

www.charitywatch.org - American Institute of Philanthropy

FTC public education materials in English: <http://www.ftc.gov/charityfraud/>

FTC public education materials in Espanol: <http://www.ftc.gov/donaciones>

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