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November 2, 2012

MEDIA ALERT

Charity scams seek second wave of financial destruction after Hurricane Sandy

"Utah consumers reminded to give wisely in wake of recent storms across eastern seaboard"

(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 asking Utah consumers to check out charitable organizations before sending financial support in the wake of Hurricane Sandy and related storm damage on the East Coast. The Division has learned from security organization Symantec that spam attacks with subject lines containing; *hurricane_sandy*, *coast_sandy*, and *sandy_superstorm* have begun flooding email inboxes since October 29, 2012. Additionally, online security experts are predicting that phishing scams and malware infested sites will look to profit from fake news reports, email links to dramatic video and photos from Sandy as well as online job or financial opportunities that use the recent super storm as a bait to draw consumers online.

"Consumers should remember that in the event of an emergency, a charity's first priority is to help victims, not solicit donations. Don't let an unknown person or group pressure you into donating over the phone, through email or via a text on your smart phone before you have checked them out," cautioned Francine A. Giani, "It just takes a few minutes to make sure your generous donation goes to those who have good intentions to help those in need."

Tips on Giving Wisely

1. Donate to charities with a track record and a history. Charities that spring up overnight may disappear just as quickly.
2. If you have any doubt about whether you've made a pledge or a contribution, check your records. If you can't remember making the donation or pledge, resist the pressure to give.
3. Check out an organization before donating. Some phony charities use names, seals and logos that look or sound like those of respected, legitimate organizations.
4. 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 or log on to:
www.consumerprotection.utah.gov

5. Do not send or give cash donations. For security and tax record purposes, it is best to pay by check made payable to the charity.

6. Ask for a receipt showing the amount of your contribution.

7. 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.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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