Charity Fraud (01/2010) – Unscrupulous individuals will use the aftermath of tragedy or disaster to perpetrate frauds and scams, citing devastation, destruction, human suffering, and an immediate need for charitable donations of goods or funds. These individuals rely and prey upon your compassion and sympathy to commit charity fraud.

Charity fraud occurs when:
(1) A legitimate individual or organization misuses donations; or
(2) An illegitimate individual or organization collects donations.

Remember the following preventative tips to reduce the risk of becoming a victim of charity fraud:

- Only donate to recognized, established, and familiar charities.
- Be cautious of charities that only develop in the wake of a tragedy or disaster.
- Be wary of charities with names that closely resemble familiar, respected or nationally known organizations.
- Be suspicious of unsolicited requests for donations or contributions, which are often received out of the blue via unsolicited e-mail, telephone call, letter, or text message.
- Give directly to a charity, not organizational solicitors who often take a portion of the proceeds to cover costs.
- Ask for written information, including the charity’s name, address, telephone number, mission statement, allocation of donations, and proof of tax deduction. Verify and confirm the legitimacy of the charity by contacting the Better Business Bureau’s Wise Giving Alliance and/or contacting the state’s specific agency responsible for regulating in-state charities and in-state charitable solicitations.
- Do not give personal or financial information, including Social Security Numbers, credit card numbers, or bank account information.
- Make donations by check or credit card, and should be payable only to the official name of the charity.

Remember, in lieu of monetary donations, often a greater impact can be made by giving time, effort, items, and/or services. For more information, and additional safeguards, visit the Federal Trade Commission’s Charity Fraud at http://www.ftc.gov/charityfraud.

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
www.800helpfla.com
1-800-435-7352

BBB Wise Giving Alliance
www.give.org
(703) 276-0100

National Association of State Charity Officials
http://www.nasconet.org/documents/u-s-charity-offices/