

# FRAUD ALERT

September 2017

## Hurricane Helpers Beware

When a disaster such as **Hurricane Harvey** hits, people want to help the victims by the giving of their time or by offering a monetary donation.

**The Bucks County Crimes against Older Adults Task Force warns residents** that unfortunately scammers also set up immediately. They are especially effective when they set up fake websites or send bogus emails that look like they are from official established organizations. They will include a link that will take the unsuspecting donor to the scammer's site. There they ask for a donation either through credit cards or by asking for direct access to your banking information.

Not only is fraud an issue, but a poorly run charity may not use your donation for its intended purpose. Your donations should go to established organizations that are prepared for large-scale disasters. The Red Cross is an example of a charitable organization that has immediate impact. They have the infrastructure, expertise and the people with experience.

### There are practical steps for donating that everyone should follow:

- Be skeptical of unsolicited phone calls, emails or links on social networking sites asking for donations. Do not give personal or financial information to anyone who solicits contributions. That information could make you vulnerable to identity theft.
- All charities who raise over \$25,000 a year must register with the Pennsylvania Department of State, Charitable Bureau Division. They can be reached at 1-800-732-0999. Again, stay away from links from emails. Go directly to the official website or look up a verified phone number of the charity you may be considering using.
- **Check the charity.** Before you donate to a charity, make sure you know where your aid is going. The Center for International Disaster Information recommends checking with a charity monitoring organization like Give Well, Charity Navigator, Charity Watch, or the Better Business Bureau before donating.
- Make sure your donation is secure by going through an organization's **official website** or sending a check in the mail.
- **Give a monetary donation, not supplies.** Most charities prefer monetary donations. These are more flexible and cause less of a strain on the charity, allowing them to help more, the CIDI explained. "Unlike material donations, cash involves no transportation costs, shipping delays, or customs fees. It also enables relief organizations to spend more time providing aid by spending less time managing goods," the organization explained on its website.

### Some already checked out charity's below.

#### You can send a text to help right now:

- **The Red Cross** said they depend on financial donations to help provide immediate relief. They have already set up a way to donate to victims with a simple text. Text the word HARVEY to 90999 to make a \$10 donation. You can also visit [redcross.org](http://redcross.org) or call 1- 800-RED CROSS.
- **The United Way** has also announced a way to text a donation: Text 41444 to UWFLLOOD to donate to the United Way Flood Relief Fund.

Donations to support **The Salvation Army's** Hurricane Harvey relief efforts can be made at [helpsalvationarmy.org](http://helpsalvationarmy.org) or by calling 1-800-SAL-ARMY.

## **Bucks County Crimes Against Older Adults Task Force**

**Bucks County District Attorney's Office**

215-348-6344

**Bucks County Area Agency on Aging**

215-348-0510

**Bucks County Coroner's Office**

215-348-3852

**Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA)**

1-800-675-6900

**A Woman's Place (AWP)**

1-800-220-8116

**Bucks County Office of Consumer Protection**

215-348-6060

**Bucks County Register of Wills**

215-348-6265

**[www.crimesagainstolderadultsbucks.org](http://www.crimesagainstolderadultsbucks.org)**

**24 - HOUR HOTLINE: 1-800-490-8505**