



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG's Office Offers Tips to Giving Wisely After Boston Marathon Tragedy

(HELENA) - After the attack on spectators and runners during the Boston Marathon, Attorney General Tim Fox is encouraging people to give wisely to charities by gathering information about an organization before making contributions.

"We encourage Montanans to consider donating to charities in the wake of this week's devastating event, but we also want potential donors to protect themselves from fundraising scams," said Attorney General Tim Fox. Most charities that solicit donations during this time are reputable and worthy of financial support from the public. Some, however, may engage in questionable tactics or mislead the public about the use of donations. According to reports, more than 125 website domain names relating to the Boston Marathon explosions were registered within an hour of the tragedy on Monday.

To best assure that your donation will be used for its intended purpose, the Attorney General's Office offers the following suggestions:

- If you're contributing over the Internet, make sure the website you're visiting belongs to a legitimate, established, and registered charity, and that the website and the charity match. See if other legitimate websites will link to that website. After tragedies of this nature, there are always individuals who will use the Internet to perpetrate fraud, and you should make sure that the website you visit is operated by the charity you want to donate to. Also, you should make sure the site is secure and will offer protection for your credit card number.
- Know your charity. Take the time to verify the address, phone number, contact information, and review the website and written material, when possible. Consider a charity's history, purpose, track record and reputation, and never give to a charity you know nothing about. If you have any doubts, well established charities with experience

in disaster relief or organizations established with support from government agencies are generally a good choice.

- Check out websites such as Charitynavigator.org and BBB.org/charity, where you'll find additional information to help you understand a large number of charities. Examine your options. Don't feel compelled to give to the first charity you come across. There are a number of established organizations already responding to the diverse needs created by the tragedy; in time there may also be legitimate, smaller charities that will emerge to focus on specific populations and communities.
- Be wary of appeals that are long on emotion. A legitimate charity will tell you how it's using your money to address this horrific disaster.
- Ask questions. How much of the money goes to the charity and how much to a professional fundraiser? Ask who employs the telephone solicitor, if your contribution is tax deductible and what the charity intends to do with any excess contributions that might remain after the victims' needs are addressed.
- Beware of professional fundraisers who try to make their solicitations sound like they are coming directly from the charity itself or volunteers.
- Don't pay by cash. Pay by check, and make it out to the charity (use its full name; don't use initials), not the fundraiser. Never give your credit card number to a fundraiser over the phone. If the fundraiser directly approaches you, ask to see identification. It's best to mail your check directly to the charity.

Individuals with questions or complaints about charitable solicitations should contact the Office of Consumer Protection at the Montana Department of Justice:

E-Mail: contactcp@mt.gov
Phone Number: 1-800-481-6896 or 406-444-4500
Mail: OCP
PO Box 200151
Helena, MT 59620

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