Jun 28, 2021

Contact Kylie Mason

Phone 850-245-0150

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

CA: AG Moody Urges Floridians to Beware of Charity Scams in Wake of Building Collapse



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today issued a Consumer Alert warning Floridians of potential charity scams associated with the Surfside building collapse. While no charity fraud complaints have been filed with the Attorney General's Office at this time, Attorney General Moody is reminding anyone donating to the victims of the Surfside building collapse to remain alert and on guard against scammers looking to exploit this disaster for personal gain. Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “My heart breaks for those struck by the devastation in Surfside and all of those impacted by this unfathomable disaster. I have seen first-hand the remarkable and generous efforts of legitimate charities and individuals helping the families affected. No doubt, people want to come to the aid of their fellow Floridians struck by this catastrophe, but please be cautious of bad actors trying to take advantage of generous donors.”

Anytime tragedy strikes, scam artists may try to prey on the goodwill of others by posing as representatives of a legitimate charity or espousing a fictional charity in order to solicit funds online, in person or over the phone.

Tips to avoid charity scams in the wake of a disaster include:

- Ensure the charity is registered and eligible to solicit in the state of Florida by visiting FDACS.gov/ConsumerServices and clicking Check-A-Charity;

- Contact the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance at Give.org or Charity Navigator to determine whether a charity has any complaints against them before donating;
- Research how the charity uses donations;
- Refrain from providing banking information to unsolicited calls or emails on behalf of a charity; and
- Carefully review the charity's name before making a donation.

Floridians should also be on the lookout for deceptive individuals operating an online fundraising campaign, such as a phony GoFundMe account. Review the following tips before making a contribution:

- Consider giving to campaigns created by known and trusted individuals;
- If information that raises suspicion is found when researching a crowdfunding organizer, report concerns to the Attorney General's Office and the campaign website;
- Note that some pages may lack names of beneficiaries as campaign organizers could be in the process of adding beneficiaries directly to the page; and
- Notify the campaign website if a potential recipient does not want a campaign set up or continued on their behalf.

Floridians can report charity scams to the Attorney General's Office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or visiting MyFloridaLegal.com. To check a charity's status or file a complaint about a charity registered in Florida, contact the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services by clicking here or calling 1(800) 435-7352.