

News Column

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Know Where Your Donations Go

With all of the natural disasters across the state in the past few weeks, you might be looking for ways to help those people and communities affected.

Unfortunately, scammers tap into this time of need and find ways to take advantage. You want to make sure your money gets in the hands of the intended recipients.

Be extremely cautious of potential charity scams. Do some research into where your money is going to ensure that your heart-felt donation will go to a reputable organization. We don't want to assume that someone might use donated money for unintended purposes, but that is the sad reality of the situation.

Consider the following tips to ensure you are not the target of scammers:

Donate to charities you know and trust. Those with proven track records of dealing with disasters are best.

Be alert for charities that seem to have sprung up overnight in connection with current events. Check out the charity with the Better Business Bureau's (BBB) Wise Giving Alliance, Charity Navigator, Charity Watch, or GuideStar.

Designate the disaster so you can ensure your funds are going directly towards those disaster relief efforts, rather than a general fund that the charity could use for any other purposes.

If you receive a donation request via email, never click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender. You could unknowingly install malware on your computer. This allows hackers access to personal information such as bank accounts and credit card information.

Don't assume that charity messages posted on social media are legitimate. Research the organization yourself or send donations directly to those affected.

When donating through text messaging be sure to confirm the number with the source before you send any funds. The charge will show up on your mobile phone bill, but donations are not immediate. This can make it hard to track. If you go this route, write down when you sent the text and the dollar amount that you committed for donation.

Find out if the charity or fundraiser must be registered in your state by contacting the National Association of State Charity Officials. If they should be registered but are not, consider finding another charity or organization.

Never use gift cards or wire transfers for funds. It is much safer to use a credit card or check.

Continue donating to help these relief efforts while following these simple tips. By doing so, you can be confident that your charitable donations are going to the right people and communities in need.

For more information about Family and Community Wellness, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension, contact the office at 620-583-7455, email me at celutz@ksu.edu or stop by the office. Visit the K-State Research and Extension - Greenwood County Facebook page and www.greenwood.k-state.edu for more up-to-date information on programming.