



# News

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*Arlington, VA, September 13, 2001--* In the wake of the tragic events at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, many charitable organizations are launching campaigns to help victims and their families. The Better Business Bureau warns potential donors against fraudulent appeals that seek to use a national tragedy to take advantage of American generosity and concern. "Given the magnitude of the event and the needs of victims and their families, we encourage the public to contribute to helpful causes, especially at this time," said Art Taylor, President and CEO of the BBB Wise Giving Alliance, "However, it is critical for donors not to succumb to pressure to make an immediate donation without first checking out soliciting groups to ensure their generosity is not misplaced."

Organizations conduct solicitations for relief in several ways: through the mail, telephone, door-to-door appeals, solicitors stationed outside busy stores or traffic intersections, the Internet, and announcements in magazines, newspapers, radio and television. "Although timing is critical in responding to the needs of victims and their families, fraudulent solicitors often demand on-the-spot contributions and rely on the fact that individuals will not question their efforts," Taylor said.

The public will receive appeals from both established and newly formed organizations. Whatever the age of the group, appeals should clearly describe the specific services the charity intends to provide to those with injuries or whose family members were killed or are missing due to the terrorist attacks. Further, they should describe whether the organization intends to meet immediate or long-term needs of those victimized by this tragedy, or both. Even newly established charities should have written material available describing their programs, anticipated expenditures, and how they will carry out activities.

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*The BBB Wise Giving Alliance was formed through the merger of the National Charities Information Bureau and the Council of Better Business Bureaus' Foundation which housed the Philanthropic Advisory Service. The Alliance produces reports on the most-asked-about national charities and specifies if they meet the CBBB Standards for Charitable Solicitations. These Standards address, among other things, charity financial, governance, and fund raising issues.*

The BBB Wise Giving Alliance also advises against giving out credit card numbers to a phone solicitor, or in response to a “spam” email received from an unknown individual or organization. This can be a ruse to obtain the card number for illegitimate purposes. Ask the caller or email sender to provide written information on the charity’s programs and finances before you make a contribution decision.

In addition, the Alliance cautions the public to carefully review offers for the sale of consumer items that claim the purchase will assist the victims of this tragedy. While some of these offers will provide help, others may not have the approved use of a charity’s name or may provide very little to the referenced charities. Look for a clear disclosure that specifies how much of the sale goes to the charity and do not hesitate to contact the named organization to confirm they have agreed to these arrangements.

Check out charities by contacting the Better Business Bureau or your local charity registration office (usually a division of the state attorney general’s office.) Information on national charities is also available from the BBB Wise Giving Alliance at [www.give.org](http://www.give.org). In addition, the Alliance offers the following tips for donors to consider:

1. Be wary of appeals that are long on emotion, but short on describing what the charity will do to address the needs of victims and their families.
2. If you contribute, do not give cash. Make a check or money order out to the name of the charitable organization, not to the individual collecting the donation.
3. Watch out for excessive pressure for on-the-spot donations. Be wary of any request to send a “runner” to pick up your contribution.
4. Do not give your credit card number or other personal information to a telephone solicitor. Ask the caller to provide you with written information on the charity’s programs and finances.
5. Do not hesitate to ask for written information that describes the charity’s program(s) and finances such as the charity’s latest annual report and financial statements. Even newly created organizations should have some basic information available.
6. Be wary of charities that are reluctant to answer reasonable questions about their operations, finances and programs. Ask how much of your gift will be used for the activity mentioned in the appeal and how much will go toward other programs and administrative and fund raising costs.

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7. Find out what the charity intends to do with any excess contributions remaining after they have funded activities for the victims and families of the terrorist attacks.
8. Check with organizations before donating goods. If the charity accepts donated items, have they confirmed there is a need for these materials? Ask about arrangements for shipping and distribution.
9. Remember the opportunities to give will continue. The tragedy aftermath will not disappear when the headlines do.
10. Check out charities with the Better Business Bureau and obtain further advice on giving and access reports on national charities by visiting [www.give.org](http://www.give.org).

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