



## Tips on Storm Relief Donations

In the wake of severe storms that came through our area, your BBB offers the following tips to help people decide where to direct donations to assist storm victims and their families:

### **Be cautious when giving online.**

Be cautious about online giving, especially in response to spam messages and emails that claim to link to a relief organization. If you are seeking to give to a charity organization involved in relief efforts, go directly to the charity's website.

### **Rely on expert opinion when it comes to evaluating a charity.**

Be careful when relying on third-party recommendations such as bloggers or other websites, as they might not have fully researched the listed relief organizations. The public can go to [BBB Wise Giving Alliance](#) to research charities and relief organizations to verify that they are accredited by the BBB and meet the [20 Standards for Charity Accountability](#). Verify with the New York State Department of Law Charities Bureau ([www.charitiesnys.com](http://www.charitiesnys.com)) that a charity is required to be registered, and if necessary, check to see if the charity has filed their information at [GuideStar](#).

### **Be wary of claims that 100 percent of donations will assist relief victims.**

Despite what an organization might claim, charities have fund raising and administrative costs. Even a credit card donation will involve, at a minimum, a processing fee. If a charity claims 100 percent of collected funds will be assisting victims, the truth is that the organization is still probably incurring fund raising and administrative expenses. They may use some of their other funds to pay this, but the expenses will still be incurred.

### **Find out if the charity has an on-the-ground presence in the impacted areas.**

See if the charity's website clearly describes what they can do to address immediate needs. Watch out for charities that don't already have staff in the affected areas as they may not be able to provide assistance quickly.

### **Find out if the charity is providing direct aid or raising money for other groups.**

Some charities may be raising money to pass along to relief organizations. If so, you may want to consider "avoiding the middleman" and giving directly to charities that have a presence in the region. Or, at a minimum, check out the ultimate recipients of these donations to ensure the organizations are equipped to effectively provide aid.

### **Donations made via your mobile device.**

The BBB Mobile Giving Foundation works with the wireless operators to ensure that mobile giving campaigns for emergency relief efforts adopt this same degree of caution before launching fundraising efforts. Wireless operators do support all qualified mobile giving campaigns without taking any fees, although billing platforms such as the BBB Mobile Giving Foundation, do recover transaction costs. All campaigns are compliant to industry best practices and regulatory requirements. Official mobile giving campaigns in support of emergency relief efforts are restricted to qualified campaigns, and can be verified by visiting [www.mobilegiving.org](http://www.mobilegiving.org).

### **Gifts of clothing, food or other in-kind donations.**

In-kind drives for food and clothing—while well intentioned— may not necessarily be the quickest way to help those in need - unless the organization has the staff and infrastructure to be able to properly distribute such aid. Ask the charity about their transportation and distribution plans, and find out what is their greatest need. Be wary of those who are not experienced in disaster relief assistance.

Disaster victims should never feel forced to make a hasty decision or to donate to an unknown charity. To verify mobile giving campaigns these charities are running please visit the BBB Mobile Giving Foundation at [www.mobilegiving.org](http://www.mobilegiving.org). Start With Trust. For reliable information, lists of BBB Accredited Businesses by industry and BBB Business Reviews you can trust on local businesses and charities, visit [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org) or call (212) 533-6200.