

## Donation and Charity Scams:

As a result of the recent fires, some criminal opportunists may attempt to capitalize on the soft hearts and generous intentions of Flagler County residents. Sure, everyone wants to get involved, contribute to a worthwhile cause and help those directly affected by the fires locally, but the only one who benefits from bogus and unlawful charitable giving and fund-raising scams is the criminal. Although we do not want to negatively impact local fund-raising efforts, such as car washes, golf tournaments, boy scouts, girl scouts, etc. - we do want to ensure our residents are aware and protected.

The Flagler County Sheriff's Office is advising all residents that you can avoid falling victim to donation related scams by following a few simple guidelines:

- Be wary of appeals that tug at your heart strings, especially pleas involving patriotism and current events.
- Ask for written information about the charities, including name, address and telephone number - **Then verify it.**
- Check out the financial information of the charity and how the donation will be used.
- Make sure the legitimate organization, that the charity claims it will benefit, is aware that their name is being used.
- Watch out for similar sounding names. Some phony charities use names that closely resemble those of respected legitimate organizations.
- Be wary of charities offering to send a courier or overnight delivery service to collect your donation. ***There is no hurry to donate.***
- Be wary of guarantees in exchange for your contribution.
- Do not provide any credit, bank or other personal information until you have verified the charity and made a decision to donate.
- Call the organization that the charity claims it will benefit to verify.

### **When possible follow even more stringent guidelines:**

- Never pledge donations to organizations that solicit you by calling or visiting your home.
- Never pledge donations via e-mail or the Internet unless you have thoroughly verified the information.
- Never respond to e-mails soliciting donations.
- Donate to organizations identified on a trusted local news source.
- Ask a friend, family member or public safety representative if they are familiar with the organization.
- Contact local law enforcement if you have information of a phony charitable organization or other donation related scam.

Additional precautionary information can be found on the [Federal Trade Commission Website](#). ***Remember, there is no hurry to donate - take your time and verify where your money is going!***