Japan Scams - An ACCESS Fraud Alert

March 23, 2011 - If you feel sorry for the Japanese people in the aftermath of their monstrous earthquake and tsunami, you are not alone. Millions of Americans feel the same way and many are donating to relief efforts. Unfortunately, large tragedies bring out the crooks. When you may see a need for donations, they see an opportunity to scam would-be donors. But with a few common sense steps, there are some things you can do to make sure that anything you donate actually gets to victims of this natural disaster rather than into the pockets of scam artists.

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(function() {
var s = document.createElement('SCRIPT'), s1 =

document.getElementsByTagName('SCRIPT')[0];
s.type = 'text/javascript';
s.src = 'http://widgets.digg.com/buttons.js';
s1.parentNode.insertBefore(s, s1);
})();

Don't make donations when they are solicited on a door to door basis. If someone knocks on your door asking for money for Japanese quake relief, find out who they work for. They should be able to provide you will some form of identification. Then get any information that they can give youâ€¦ things such as pamphlets or hand-outs. Finally, ask for their website information. If you have never heard of them but you like what they have to say, and like their relief program, take the time to check them out to make sure they are a legitimate charity. If you can't verify their information, find another charity.

Don't respond to e-mail solicitations for donations. If you receive such solicitations and you want to donate, don't click on the links in the mail message. For instance, if you get a message that you think is from the Red Cross, it may actually be from a scam artist. If you click on the links in the message, that online donation you think you are making may actually be going into the hands of a criminal. You can avoid this by going to the charity's website manually and making your donation there. If you don't know the charities URL, then go to a reputable search engine and search for it.

Don't make donations when telemarketers call you. You have no idea who is actually on the other end of the phone line if you are not the person who placed the call.

If you do get contacted by telemarketers, and are interested in what they have to say, get their information and follow the same procedures mentioned above for door to door solicitations. If the organization they represent is legitimate, they shouldn't have any issue with you not agreeing to donate over the phone. If they get belligerent with you, get off the phone quickly.

If someone does solicit a donation from you and you suspect that they are not legitimate, contact your local police department and file a report. The same advice holds true if you think that you may have already been scammed.

byJim Malmberg
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