

HAITIAN EARTHQUAKE RELIEF FRAUD ALERT

01/13/10—The FBI today reminds Internet users who receive appeals to donate money in the aftermath of Tuesday's earthquake in Haiti to apply a critical eye and do their due diligence before responding to those requests. Past tragedies and natural disasters have prompted individuals with criminal intent to solicit contributions purportedly for a charitable organization and/or a good cause.

Therefore, before making a donation of any kind, consumers should adhere to certain guidelines, to include the following:

Do not respond to any unsolicited (spam) incoming e-mails, including clicking links contained within those messages.

Be skeptical of individuals representing themselves as surviving victims or officials asking for donations via e-mail or social networking sites.

Verify the legitimacy of nonprofit organizations by utilizing various Internet-based resources that may assist in confirming the group's existence and its nonprofit status rather than following a purported link to the site.

Be cautious of e-mails that claim to show pictures of the disaster areas in attached files because the files may contain viruses. Only open attachments from known senders.

Make contributions directly to known organizations rather than relying on others to make the donation on your behalf to ensure contributions are received and used for intended purposes.

Do not give your personal or financial information to anyone who solicits contributions: Providing such information may compromise your identity and make you vulnerable to identity theft.