

# Prince William County Police

## CRIME ALERT



8/29/17

### Hurricane Harvey Disaster Relief Scams

The Prince William County Police Department reminds residents who receive appeals to donate money in the aftermath of the Hurricane Harvey to apply a critical eye, and do their due diligence, before responding to such 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:

- Donate to charities you know and trust with a proven track record of dealing with disasters.
- Be alert for charities that seem to have sprung up overnight in connection with current events. Check out the charity with the [Better Business Bureau's \(BBB\) Wise Giving Alliance](#), [Charity Navigator](#), [Charity Watch](#), or [GuideStar](#).
- Be cautious of emails that claim to show pictures of the disaster areas in attached files because the files may contain viruses. Only open attachments from senders you know.
- Be skeptical of individuals representing themselves as surviving victims or officials asking for donations via email or social networking sites.
- Don't assume that charity messages posted on social media are legitimate. Research the organization yourself.
- Verify the legitimacy of nonprofit organizations by using 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.
- Make contributions directly to known organizations rather than relying on others to make the donation on your behalf. This ensures that contributions are received and used for intended purposes.
- When texting to donate, confirm the number with the source before you donate. The charge will show up on your mobile phone bill, but donations are not immediate.

**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.

*\* Source: FTC.gov*

## REPORT ALL SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY TO THE POLICE

**Emergency: 911 - Non-Emergency: 703-792-6500**