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money they donate to help with tornado relief in Oklahoma goes to disaster victims rather than scam artists.

May. 22, 2013

North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper warned state residents Tuesday to make sure any money they donate to help with tornado relief in Oklahoma goes to disaster victims rather than scam artists.

“Our hearts go out to the victims of this terrible storm in Oklahoma, but unfortunately some heartless scammers will see this disaster as an opportunity to line their own pockets,” Cooper said in a statement. “Don’t let phony charities divert your money from where you intend it to go. Do your homework before you give to make sure your donation does the most good possible.”

The state Consumer Protection Division hasn’t yet received complaints from consumers about fraudulent fundraising efforts for tornado relief, but previous natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes have spawned such scams, state officials say.

Cooper encouraged North Carolinians to give generously but to watch for charity scams. Consumers can report potential scams to the Attorney General’s office by calling (877)-566-7326 or filing a complaint at [www.ncdoj.gov](http://www.ncdoj.gov).

People should watch out for pushy telemarketers. Telemarketers who refuse to answer questions, offer to pick up donations or pressure consumers are usually up to no good, state officials said. Some telemarketers keep up to 90 percent of the money they collect for charities, authorities stated.

The Attorney General’s office recommends that residents give directly to the real charity, not to hired fundraisers.

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names that are close to the names of real charities, nonprofits or law enforcement agencies, state officials said. If residents want to donate, contact the real charity or organization at a website or phone number that they know is valid.

Donors shouldn't give cash. Cash gifts can be lost or stolen. For security and tax record purposes, it's best to pay by credit card, state officials said. If donors pay by check, make it out to the charity itself, not the fundraiser.

Residents should protect their personal information. People should never give credit card or bank account number to someone they don't know who contacts them for any reason.

Potential donors should decline high-pressure appeals, state officials said.

To check out a potential charity, visit [www.give.org](http://www.give.org) to see if national charities meet the standards set by the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance, and [www.charitywatch.org](http://www.charitywatch.org) for ratings of charities by the American Institute of Philanthropy.

Other sources are [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org) and [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org).

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Small Business

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