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Contact: George Althoff, 608-261-4504

Make sure storm-relief donation is given to a reputable charity

MADISON – The devastation caused by Super Typhoon “Haiyan” in the Philippines has prompted many relief organizations to ramp up their efforts to raise funds to help the storm victims. But in times of such a tragedy, legitimate relief organizations aren’t the only ones that ask for donations, warns the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions (DFI).

“Wisconsin citizens are known for their generosity and many of them will make donations to help the hundreds of thousands of people affected by this tragedy,” DFI Secretary Peter Bildsten said. “Unfortunately, scammers and charlatans are quick to prey on the good intentions of potential donors. So we encourage Wisconsinites to make sure their donations are being made to a reputable charity.”

Bildsten offered these tips for people considering a donation:

- Donate to organizations that you know and trust.
- Do not give a telephone solicitor your bank account or credit card information.
- Do not contribute cash. Send a check or money order made out to the charity, not to an individual.
- Check to see if the charity is registered with DFI by going to www.wdfi.org/CharitableOrganizations and clicking on “Search Registrants.”
- Be wary of telephone solicitors seeking donations. If you receive such a call, ask the individual to put the request in writing and include information about the charitable organization.
- Be alert for charities that have sprung up overnight, often times in connection with events such as natural disasters.
- If a tax deduction is important to you, make sure the charity to which you are donating has a tax-deductible status with the Internal Revenue Service. You can check the status of charities with organizations such as the Better Business Bureau of Wisconsin (www.wisconsin.bbb.org) or Guide Star (www.guidestar.org).

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