



State of Wisconsin
Department of Financial Institutions

Scott Walker, **Governor**

Jay Risch, **Secretary**

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Watch for Wisconsin Scams in Florence's Wake

MADISON – In the wake of widespread damage caused by Hurricane Florence, the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions (DFI) and the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) today cautioned investors to watch out for opportunistic investment or charitable scams in Wisconsin.

“Natural disasters bring out the best and worst in people. While news stemming from Hurricane Florence has rightfully focused on the tireless efforts of first responders and neighbors helping neighbors, we know from experience that financial predators seek to profit from the misfortune of others,” said DFI Secretary Jay Risch. “Unsolicited investment offers seeking to capitalize on the aftermath of Hurricane Florence should be approached with extreme caution.”

“Research is the key to ensuring that your generous donation goes to a good cause,” said Michelle Reinen, Director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection at DATCP. “We recommend that everyone should look up charities by name at www.charitynavigator.org or www.give.org, be leery of high-pressure pitches, and use caution with charities that pop up after a disaster.”

DFI and DATCP recommend watching for red flags of hurricane-related scams, including unsolicited email, social media messages, crowdfunding pitches or telephone calls promoting investment pools or bonds to help storm victims, water-removal or purification technologies, electricity-generating devices and distressed real estate remediation programs. The agencies also caution about fraudulent charitable solicitations that prey on the goodness of people seeking to help those in need.

DFI offers three quick tips to help investors avoid disaster-related scams:

- Delete unsolicited emails or social media messages and hang up on aggressive cold callers promoting hurricane-related investments, especially those from small companies touting unproven or new technologies or products.
- Use common sense. Claims of guaranteed returns or low/no investment risk are classic red flags. Every investment involves some degree of risk.
- Do your homework. Contact DFI at (608) 266-2139 to check that both the seller and investment are licensed and registered. If not, they may be operating illegally.

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