



Alerts

Bogus Charity Relief Scam is the Disaster that Keeps on Giving this Holiday Season

December 2, 2019

Cyber Alert

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Risk Management Question

How can you train your law firm employees to spot bogus charity and disaster relief requests?

The Issue

Tomorrow is Giving Tuesday—one of the most popular days for charities to ask for donations. Natural disasters and severe weather events create opportunities for fraudsters to exploit the public's giving nature. Scammers are aware of this and send out their own fraudulent solicitations for donations. Watch for these techniques:

- Fake relief websites set up in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. In the case of hurricanes, scammers will register domains with the same name as the storm with words like "aid," "relief," or "help."
- Fake charities implying a connection to a real charity such as the Red Cross in order to lend legitimacy to their scam.
- Fraudsters using a name or website address that closely resembles a legitimate charity.
- Bogus aid solicitation in the form of text messages, phone calls, emails, and social media posts.

Risk Management Solutions

Remind employees to take these steps before donating to charities:

- Use charity "watchdog" services such as the [BBB's Wise Giving Alliance](#) to ensure you are giving to a legitimate charity.
- Peruse the website for details such as its leadership, previous relief work history, and physical location. If you can't find this information, there is a good chance it is a scam.
- Do not give personal or financial information—such as a social security number or banking information—to anyone soliciting a donation, or anyone

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else for that matter.

- Do not click on links in unsolicited emails, social media posts, or text messages. These links can inject malware onto your computer or mobile device.
- Do not donate via text message until you have confirmed the phone number on a legitimate website.

Consider contacting your state's charity regulator to verify an organization is registered to raise money. Above all else, educate your employees on a regular basis about how to spot and avoid bogus solicitations.

Happy Holidays from Hinshaw! And remember, always think before you click.