



OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

Sheriff Curtis L. Landers
225 W. Olive Street
Newport, Oregon 97365
(541) 265-4277
Fax (541) 265-4926

TIP OF THE WEEK

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Sheriff Curtis Landers
541-265-0654
clanders@co.lincoln.or.us

BEWARE OF DISASTER SCAMMERS

Our hearts go out to the many people who are in crisis due to the recent fires. Everyone wants to help in some way so when different organizations and charities, FEMA, contractors etc.. begin reaching out to help those suffering from such a loss, how do you know if they are legitimate?

We have seen in the past that when disasters attract national attention they are often used by scammers to create fake charities and crowdfunding campaigns even fake companies to rip off people who want to support a worthy cause. If you're looking for a way to give, do your research to ensure your donation will go to a reputable organization that will use the money as promised - and as you intend.

Also, as you start looking into rebuilding your home, check on the contractors. We have so many great contractors within our community. But there are some people out there who are just hoping to take advantage of a vulnerable and desperate situation. Are they legitimate? We've included a link at the end for you to see if they have an Oregon license.

There are certain red-flags that should alert you to the likelihood you are being scammed by a bogus charity/contractor. Review the following checklist when dealing with a possible charity to ensure you are not being scammed:

- Do not give out personal information such as credit card or bank account numbers over the phone.
- Checks should always be made payable to the organization, not the person collecting the donation.
- Beware of callers who want your money fast. When solicited by phone, always ask the caller to send you written materials about the charity. No legitimate organization will insist that you donate immediately.
- Do not donate cash. Legitimate charities will be pleased to receive a contribution by check. Do not send contributions with a "runner," by wire or overnight parcel pick-up service.
- Be cautious before giving to individuals raising money through crowdfunding websites. You cannot be sure that your gift will be used as intended, plus donations to individuals are not

tax deductible. Instead, look for online giving campaigns that benefit charitable organizations assisting a larger number of people.

- Be sure you are contributing to a legitimate organization registered with the Oregon Department of Justice by searching the Department's online database at <https://www.doj.state.or.us/charitable-activities/> or by calling 971-673-1880. You can also visit <http://www.guidestar.org>, a national clearinghouse of information about charities and their performance.
- Oregon Contractor License <http://search.ccb.state.or.us/search/>
- FEMA General Questions AskIA@fema.dhs.gov In your email include your name, city and state where the disaster occurred or that you are asking about.

For more information and tips, visit our website at www.lincolncountysheriff.net and Like us on Facebook at Lincoln County Sheriff's Office – Oregon.

<http://search.ccbstate.or.us/search/>