

Dept. of Financial Institutions, DATCP: Watch for Wisconsin scams in Hurricane Michael's wake

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MADISON - As the staggering damage assessments caused by Hurricane Michael in the southeastern U.S., continue to roll out, the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions (DFI) and the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) today again cautioned investors to watch out for opportunistic investment or charitable scams in Wisconsin.

“This is another major disaster for our country and people from Wisconsin are already responding including our National Guard and regional Red Cross volunteers,” said DFI Secretary Jay Risch. “Unfortunately, this also means there are opportunistic investments and donations which are total scams, and everyone should be very careful to be sure they’re giving to legitimate, worthwhile causes.”

“Natural disasters bring out the best in people, but they also can draw scammers out of the woodwork,” said Michelle Reinen, Director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection at DATCP. “To ensure that you are making a donation to a legitimate organization, use www.charitynavigator.org or www.give.org before you make a payment.”

DFI and DATCP continue to 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 reminds everyone about 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.