



How to avoid fraud and scams after a disaster

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Criminals and fraudsters often see disasters as an opportunity to take advantage of victims when they are the most vulnerable, as well as the generous taxpayers who want to help with relief efforts.

These disaster scams normally start with unsolicited contact. The scammer contacts their possible victim by telephone, social media, email or in-person. Also, taxpayers may search for a charity online and be directed to a website or social media page that is not affiliated with the actual charity.

Here are some tips to help taxpayers recognize a scam and avoid becoming a victim:

- Some thieves pretend they are from a charity. They do this to get money or private information from well-intentioned taxpayers.
- Bogus websites use names like legitimate charities. They do this scam to trick people to send money or provide personal financial information.
- Scammers even claim to be working for — or on behalf of — the IRS. The thieves say they can help victims file casualty loss claims and get tax refunds.
- Disaster victims can call the IRS toll-free disaster assistance line at [866-562-5227](tel:866-562-5227). Phone assistants will answer questions about tax relief or disaster-related tax issues.
- Taxpayers who want to make donations can get information to help them on [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov). The [Tax Exempt Organization Search](#) helps users find or verify qualified charities. Donations to these charities may be tax-deductible.
- Taxpayers should always contribute by check or credit card to have a record of the tax-deductible donation if they choose to give money. Individual taxpayers can deduct up to \$300 and married couples can deduct up to \$600 in qualifying charitable contributions for tax year 2021 even if they don't itemize.
- Donors should not give out personal financial information to anyone who solicits a contribution. This includes things like Social Security numbers or credit card and bank account numbers and passwords.

More Information:

- [National Center for Disaster Fraud](#) 
- [DisasterAssistance.gov](#) 

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