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MEDIA ALERT

Consumer Protection warns of China Earthquake Charity E-mail Scam

"Con artists craft fake charity email to take money from unsuspecting donors"

(For immediate release)

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah – Francine A. Giani, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Commerce, announced today that the Division of Consumer Protection has received complaints about a new charity e-mail scam that references the recent earthquake in China and asks recipients to send money via Western Union to organizations and/or individuals in Lagos, Nigeria. The email subject line is titled: HELP THE NEEDY TZU CHI FOUNDATION, CHINA EARTHQUAKE. The email also includes hyperlinks to legitimate websites that show images of the China earthquake and other relief efforts to try to make their offer seem legitimate. "Help the Needy" and "The Tzu Chi Foundation" are not registered charities with the Utah Division of Consumer Protection. Recipients should not reply or open this email and delete it from their inbox.

"History has shown that each natural catastrophe, whether close to home or overseas, brings out con artists looking to make a fast buck off generous Utah citizens," said Francine A. Giani, "Make sure your donations are going to a legitimate cause by taking two minutes to check them out with Consumer Protection."

The Division of Consumer Protection has a public list of registered Utah charities which are authorized to solicit funds. Consumers can review this list anytime by logging on www.consumerprotection.utah.gov, clicking on the "Education" section and selecting "Registered Charities".

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