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June 1, 2011

MEDIA ALERT

Citizens reminded to give wisely in wake of national tornados and flooding

(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 is reminding Utah consumers to check out charitable organizations before sending monetary support in the wake of recent tornados in Missouri, Arkansas and other parts of the country. Also, with recent flooding concerns across the state of Utah many homeowners and business owners may be looking for flood repairs and are advised to work with licensed contractors.

“Images of devastating tornado damage in Joplin, Missouri and surrounding states leave many of us wanting to help fellow Americans. Our Division is asking that consumers take a few minutes to check out the groups first before handing over their money to make sure storm victims truly benefit from your generous donation and not cunning fraudsters,” said Francine A. Giani, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Commerce.

To date, the Division of Consumer Protection has not received reports of any active charity scams surrounding these storms but has noticed a marked increase in the number of organizations offering cell phone donations and auctions on social networking sites which may make donations harder to trace.

Tips on Giving Wisely

1. Donate to charities with a track record and a history. Charities that spring up overnight may disappear just as quickly.
2. If you have any doubt about whether you’ve made a pledge or a contribution, check your records. If you can’t remember making the donation or pledge, resist the pressure to give.
3. Check out an organization before donating. Some phony charities use names, seals and logos that look or sound like those of respected, legitimate organizations.
4. Call the Utah Division of Consumer Protection at (801) 530-6601 to see whether the

charity or fundraising organization has to be registered in Utah or log on to: www.consumerprotection.utah.gov

5. Do not send or give cash donations. For security and tax record purposes, it is best to pay by check made payable to the charity.

6. Ask for a receipt showing the amount of your contribution.

7. Be wary of promises of guaranteed sweepstakes winnings in exchange for a contribution. You never have to give a donation to be eligible to win a sweepstakes.

Check out a Contractor or professional before signing on to Flood Repairs

Fraudsters aim at disaster-affected areas, hoping to cash in on property owners' insurance settlements and federal government relief. Home and business owners who are considering whether to hire a contractor should:

- Ask for copies of the contractor's general liability and worker's compensation insurance.
- Verify their contractors' license by checking with the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing at: www.dopl.utah.gov
- Check the contractor's identification and references.
- Avoid paying more than the minimum in advance.

Additional Resources for Consumers

www.guidestar.org - Guidestar

www.bbb.us/charity - Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance

www.charitynavigator.org - Charity Navigator

www.charitywatch.org - American Institute of Philanthropy

FTC public education materials in English: <http://www.ftc.gov/charityfraud/>

FTC public education materials in Espanol: <http://www.ftc.gov/donaciones>

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