

This is an important message from Pinellas County Government.

While Hurricane Dorian continues to move away from Florida, Pinellas County Consumer Protection is advising citizens to wary of solicitations for charitable contributions on behalf of Hurricane Dorian victims in the Bahamas or elsewhere.

All charities soliciting within Florida – excluding religions, educational and government entities – are required to register and file financial information with the with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. To check whether a charitable organization is properly registered, visit [Check-A-Charity](#), a resource that provides the information reported to the department.

Here are additional recommendations from Consumer Protection:

- Always be wary of people soliciting on behalf of victims of natural disasters.
- Do not judge an organization based solely on its name. Many organizations have names that sound like those of reputable organizations but may be fraudulent.
- Ask for a copy of the charity's financial report to determine how much of your contribution is going toward the cause and how much for administrative and fundraising costs.
- Beware of pressure tactics to give immediately. Don't let emotional appeals or photos persuade you into giving. Make sure the solicitation is legitimate.

- Some charitable groups employ paid solicitors, in which case, not all of your donation will go to the charitable cause. Check to see if this is the case.
- Ask if donations are tax deductible.
- Never give cash. Contribute by check made payable to the organization, never to an individual's name.

For more information on how to protect yourself after a storm, visit Pinellas County Post-Disaster Consumer Tips. To report suspected fraud, call (727) 464-6200.

Hurricane Season is not over! Continue to prepare. Even if your stay/go kit was not needed for this storm, you will have it ready for the next threat. Remember: September is the busiest month of the year for hurricanes.

Alert Pinellas

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