

We have received the following article from CUNA (Credit Union National Association) to remind our members to be informed on any donations they may make.

FBI issues Haitian relief fraud alert

WASHINGTON (1/14/10)--Internet users who receive appeals to donate funds in the aftermath of Tuesday's earthquake in Haiti need to perform their due diligence before responding to the requests, said the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Credit unions might want to warn members that past tragedies and natural disasters have prompted criminals to solicit contributions that they claim are for a charitable organization or a good cause.

Before making any donation, consumers should use these guidelines, said the FBI.

- Do not respond to any unsolicited (spam) incoming e-mails, including clicking links contained within the messages;
- Be skeptical of individuals representing themselves as surviving victims or officials asking for donations via e-mail or social networking sites;
- Verify the legitimacy of nonprofit organizations by using Internet-based resources to assist in confirming the group's existence and its nonprofit status rather than following a purported link to the site;
- Be cautious of e-mails that claim to show photos of the disaster areas in attached files because these files may contain viruses. Only open attachments from known senders;
- Make contributions directly to known organizations rather than relying on others to make the donation on your behalf to ensure contributions are received and used for intended purposes; and
- Do not give personal or financial information to anyone soliciting contributions; providing that information may compromise your identity and make you vulnerable to identity theft.

The agency said anyone receiving a suspicious e-mail or anyone who becomes a victim of such incidents should notify the Internet Crime Complaint Center, known as IC3. To do so, use the resource link.