

AG's Office Offers Tips to Giving Wisely After Marathon Tragedy

While Encouraging Outpouring of Support and Generosity, AG Reminds Potential Donors to Do Homework First; Fraudulent Websites Appeared Soon After Other National Tragedies

BOSTON – After the attack on spectators and runners during the Boston Marathon, Attorney General Martha Coakley is encouraging people to give wisely to charities by gathering information about an organization before making contributions.

AG Coakley encourages Massachusetts residents to consider donating to charities and support funds in the wake of this devastating event, but also warns potential donors to protect themselves from fundraising scams claiming to benefit those affected by this week's tragedy. Most charities that solicit donations during this time are reputable and worthy of financial support from the public, like [The One Fund Boston](#). Some, however, may engage in questionable tactics or mislead the public about the use of donations. According to reports, more than 125 website domain names relating to the Boston Marathon explosions were registered within an hour of the tragedy on Monday.

“After the unconscionable attack at the Boston Marathon, there has been an outpouring of support from people who want to help,” AG Coakley said. “We urge people from Massachusetts and across the country to continue to support the victims and those impacted by this horrific event. We also encourage people to do their homework on the charity before giving to ensure their money will go to the purpose they intend.”

“Our office received reports just this morning that a mere four hours after the attack at the marathon, over 125 domain names were registered to collect money for the victims and several fraudulent twitter accounts were opened asking for money as well,” said Undersecretary of Consumer Affairs Barbara Anthony. “It is unspeakable that anyone would sink to capitalize on Boston’s sorrow as we recover from this tragedy. We remind consumers to exercise caution and do their homework before reaching

out to help.”

To best assure that your donation will be used for its intended purpose, the Attorney General's Office offers the following suggestions:

- If you are contributing over the Internet, make sure that the website you are visiting belongs to a legitimate, established, and registered charity, and that the website and the charity match. See if other legitimate websites will link to that website. After tragedies of this nature, there are always individuals who will use the Internet to perpetrate fraud, and you should make sure that the website you visit is operated by the charity you want to donate to. Also, you should make sure the site is secure and will offer protection for your credit card number.
- Check to see if the charity is registered and filing with the Attorney General's Non-Profit Organizations/Public Charities Division. Registration and filing information can be obtained online at www.mass.gov/ago/charitiesreports or by calling the division at 617-727-2200 x2101.
- Know your charity. Take the time to verify the address, phone number, contact information, and review the website and written material, when possible. Consider a charity's history, purpose, track record and reputation, and never give to a charity you know nothing about. If you have any doubts, well established charities with experience in disaster relief or organizations established with support from government agencies are generally a good choice.
- Check out websites such as Charitynavigator.org and BBB.org/charity, where you will find additional information to help you understand a large number of charities. Examine your options. Do not feel compelled to give to the first charity you come across. There are a number of established organizations already responding to the diverse needs created by the tragedy; in time there may also be legitimate, smaller charities that will emerge to focus on specific populations and communities.
- Be wary of appeals that are long on emotion. A legitimate charity will tell you how it's using your money to address this horrific disaster.
- Ask lots of questions. How much of the money goes to the charity and how much to a professional fundraiser? Ask who employs the telephone solicitor, if

your contribution is tax deductible and what the charity intends to do with any excess contributions that might remain after the victims' needs are addressed.

- Beware of professional fundraisers who try to make their solicitations sound like they are coming directly from the charity itself or volunteers.
- Do not pay by cash. Pay by check, and make it out to the charity (use its full name; don't use initials), not the fundraiser. Never give your credit card number to a fundraiser over the telephone. If the fundraiser directly approaches you, ask to see identification. It is best to mail your check directly to the charity.

Individuals with inquiries or complaints about charitable solicitations should call the Attorney General's Non-Profit Organizations/Public Charities Division at 617-727-2200 x2101, [access the complaint form online](#) , or write to:

Office of the Attorney General
Non-Profit Organizations/Public Charities
Division
One Ashburton Place
Boston, MA 02108

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