Watch for Fake Charities After Natural Disasters

Scammers impersonate legitimate charities or create bogus charities to try to solicit donations, claiming that the money goes to help the victims of natural disasters.

How does this scam work?
In the wake of a natural disaster, scammers will often try to take advantage of the generosity of people seeking to help those in afflicted areas. Fraudulent schemes will often begin with unsolicited contact via telephone, email, social media or in person. Scammers use a variety of tactics.

Some impersonate legitimate charities to solicit money or personally identifiable information from people. Others create bogus websites with names similar to legitimate charities to solicit money or gain personally identifiable information. And others operate bogus charities and attempt to solicit money or financial information via telephone or email.

What if I'm a victim?
Report all fraud to your local law enforcement agency's non-emergency number. If you believe someone is in danger, call 911. Report scams and financial abuse to the state attorney general, and file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at ftc.gov/complaint.

How can I protect myself?
Never give out or confirm personal information over the phone, through email or on a website until you have checked out whoever is asking you for it.

Don't trust a name, phone number or email address just because it seems to be connected with the government. Scammers commonly use official-sounding names.

Donate to charities you know and trust, either because you've donated to them before, or you are aware of their reputation.

Contact government agencies directly, and use phone numbers and websites you know are legitimate.