



IOWA FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

THE VOICE OF IOWA'S FIRE FIGHTERS

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Press Release

Suspicious Phone Solicitation Fund Raising Activities

Be sure donations go to the fire department of your choice

- **November 16, 2010:** The Iowa Firefighters Association has received a report of a suspicious phone solicitation that shows on caller ID as originating from an Urbandale phone number. It appears that the caller is “spoofing” the caller ID to hide the caller’s phone number. In this case, the caller was seeking a donation to help pay for firefighting equipment. The caller stated that he represented Iowa Firefighters but gave no specific department or organization. This call occurred in Camanche, IA area and we have also had a report of a similar call in Ruthven, IA. There have been calls to other areas of the state in the past.

The Iowa Firefighters Association would like to remind everyone that we do not participate in phone solicitation programs. While there are legitimate professional fund-raising companies that are hired by organizations to solicit donations on their behalf, people receiving these calls should be very cautious. “Legitimate organizations will be quick to provide phone numbers and information so that you can verify that your donation will go where you want it to go. People receiving request for phone calls for donations must verify that the request is legitimate before making any donation,” said Iowa Firefighters Association President Ellen Hagen. If you are interested in making a donation to charitable organizations, first do your homework. Take

some time to learn about the group or organization in order to ensure their legitimacy and that your donation is being used for the purpose intended.

The Iowa Attorney General's Office offers these tips to protect you from fund raising abuses:

- **Don't be fooled by a sympathetic name or "pitch."** Some operations use names that promise more than they deliver. For example, veterans, law enforcement, fire fighters, and children's causes clearly deserve generous public support – but some marginal operations claim connections with such groups yet provide them with very little support. Contact your local sheriff or police or fire department or veteran's organization to check out claims that a donation "will be used locally."
- **Ask questions.** Reputable charities welcome questions. Ask how much of your donation will go for the charitable purpose, and exactly how and where your contribution will be used. Ask if the caller is a professional fundraiser.
- **Ask phone solicitors to send written information.** Check out the charity before you make a decision. Be suspicious if they refuse to send solid information. Check them out at the national Better Business Bureau "wise giving" site – www.give.org.
- **Don't be fooled by "look-alike" names.** Some scams use names that sound impressive and are designed to resemble well-respected organizations.
- **Don't give your credit card or checking account numbers over the phone to someone you don't know.**
- **Give directly to a known charity of your choice.** That's always the best option. Check your telephone directory for a charity's local office and contact the office.

If you think you may have been cheated by a fundraising scheme, write to the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division, Hoover Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319. Call 515-281-5926, or 888-777-4590 toll free. The A.G. web site is: www.iowaAttorneyGeneral.gov.

Please check with your local charitable organization before making any contribution and be sure to report any suspicious fund-raising activity to your local police department.

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