

BBB advice on donating by text message to Haiti Relief Efforts

Written by

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In the wake of the earthquake disaster in Haiti, Americans are donating via text message more than ever before. The Better Business Bureau (BBB) of Minnesota and North Dakota advises donors that giving through text can be a safe and easy way to give—but you should still use caution.

Within days following the disaster in Haiti, it was widely reported that more than \$3 million was donated through text message to such organizations as the Red Cross and others.

“It’s encouraging that people are making small donations through text messages,” said Dana Badgerow, president and CEO of the BBB of Minnesota and North Dakota. “An incredible amount of money will be needed to address the crisis in Haiti and charities will certainly welcome gifts made through any means available. However, donors should still do their due diligence to make sure their money is going to trustworthy charities.”

The BBB Wise Giving Alliance (www.give.org) offers the following tips on giving through text messages:

- Confirm the number directly with the source. While the BBB has not yet heard of any scams relying on text message donations, this emerging method for donating is ripe for exploitation by scammers. However, two texting donation methods which have been confirmed are: by texting ‘Haiti’ to 90999, a \$10 donation will be made to the American Red Cross; and by texting ‘Yele’ to 501501, a \$5 donation will be made to the Yele Haiti Earthquake Fund (www.yele.org). In each case, donors will be billed by their cell phone carrier for the amount of their donation.
- Be aware that text donations are not immediate. Depending on the text message service used by the charity, text donations can take anywhere from 30-90 days to be transferred to the designated charity. If you would like the donation to be received immediately by the charity, you can give online through the charity Web site, by calling the charity directly or by sending a check in the mail.
- Review the fine print. When you give to a charity through text message, you might also be signing yourself up to receive text message updates from the charity in the future. A charity should include the details of its text campaign on its Web site so you can see what you’re signing up for and how you can opt out.
- Research the charity. Giving wisely to a charity isn’t just about making sure that the solicitation isn’t coming from scammers. Wise donors make sure their donations are going to charities that are best equipped to help in the relief efforts and will responsibly use the money for its intended purpose.

The BBB Wise Giving Alliance has compiled a list of charities which are seeking to provide assistance in response to the earthquake in Haiti and meet BBB Standards for Charity Accountability at <http://www.bbb.org/us/haiti-earthquake-relief/>

The mission of the Better Business Bureau is to promote, through self-regulation, the highest standards of business ethics and conduct, and to instill public confidence in responsible

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businesses through programs of education and action that inform, protect and assist the general public. Contact the BBB at www.thefirstbbb.org or 651-699-1111, toll-free at 1-800-646-6222.