

***BEFORE YOU GIVE,
CHECK OUT THE CHARITY***

- ❑ Do not give to a charity you know nothing about.
- ❑ Is the charity registered in California? Is the fund-raiser registered? Search the Attorney General's Internet data bases: <http://caag.state.ca.us/charities>
- ❑ Ask if the solicitor is a volunteer or paid fund-raiser.
- ❑ Ask how much of your donation will actually go to the charity.
- ❑ Ask who will benefit from your donation.
- ❑ Don't assume when you hear "police" or "fire fighter" in an organization's name that your donation is going to the local police or fire department.
- ❑ Call local law enforcement to verify donations will benefit the department. If not, report the solicitation to local law enforcement.
- ❑ Ask if your contribution is tax-deductible
- ❑ Do not hesitate to ask for written information about the charity's programs/finances before giving.

- ❑ Don't feel pressured to give.
- ❑ Never give cash, your credit card number or bank account number.
- ❑ Always write a check payable to the charity so you have a record of your donation.
- ❑ Be wary if a solicitor suggest you will receive special treatment for your donation.
- ❑ Or give locally and directly to charities you can visit and whose programs you can see.

DON'T MAKE A DONATION IF...

- The solicitor says there is an urgent need for an immediate donation.
- The solicitor wants to send a courier to pick up your donation.
- The solicitor refuses to send you written materials describing the charity's programs/finances.
- The solicitor becomes angry or threatens you.
- If any of these things happen, just hang up the phone and report the call to your local police department.

Public Safety Fundraising Appeals

Check It Out Before You Give

Facts & Tips For Donations



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PUBLIC SAFETY FUND-RAISING APPEALS

Californians are generous contributors to charity and are more likely to make a donation to firefighter and police/ sheriff organizations than to any other kind of fundraising appeal. While donors often think their gift will help their local police, fire or sheriff's department, that usually isn't true.

Here are some facts about public safety appeals to consider:

- Police, fire and sheriff's departments do not solicit contributions.
- Having "police" or "firefighter" in a name doesn't necessarily mean that police officers or firefighters are members of the group.
- Fraudulent organizations use these words in their name because they know people are more likely to make a donation.
- Most solicitations for public safety organizations are made by commercial fundraisers, who are paid for their services. Solicitors may say they are police officers or firefighters. More often, though, they will say they are working "with" them.

- Ask for written information about the charity and the charity's programs before making your commitment to a donation over the telephone. If you receive written information, you should see what the organization does and where your donated funds will be used.
- Not all donations are tax-deductible. Some associations are formed to benefit members and donations are not tax deductible unless solicited to benefit the community, like summer camp or fire safety programs for schools.
- Some commercial fundraisers have been known to list their phone numbers in the name of the charity so that donors calling that number think they are talking directly to the charity instead of the paid solicitor.
- California law requires commercial fundraisers to identify themselves as such at the beginning of the solicitation and to disclose, if asked, the percentage of the donation that the charity will receive.
- Some fundraising contracts provide for a flat percentage return to charity after deduction of the fundraiser's expenses, which could be higher than 80% or as low as 1%.
- A claim that the organization has local ties does not necessarily mean the money will be used locally.
- Some fundraisers seek to mislead donors by beginning with a "thank you" for past contributions, when in fact you haven't given any donation.
- Commercial fundraisers must be registered with the Attorney General's Registry of Charitable Trusts before soliciting contributions in California.
- While receipts given to donors prominently display the organization's EIN (employer identification number), this does not necessarily mean the organization has tax-exempt status.
- Some fundraisers threaten that emergency services will be denied unless a donation is made. This is untrue. Report such calls to local law enforcement.
- Some fundraisers will offer decals claiming the donor won't be given traffic citations if placed in a car window, the donor won't be given traffic citations. Such claims are untrue. Report such calls to local law enforcement officials.