

Fraud Alert

Scam Targeting Disaster Victims

October 2017

Recently, at least two individuals contacted local United Ways attempting to confirm the legitimacy of an email that appeared to come from a valid United Way email address. The email used the United Way logo, and included a fact sheet attachment with “Give. Advocate. Volunteer. LIVE UNITED” and the logo with details on a United Way Disaster Recovery Fund. The contents of the fact sheet looked and read like the source was a real United Way.

The email requested the individual submit their driver’s license, last four digits of their Social Security Number, and bank information in order to receive \$400 per week for 15 weeks. A Facebook page was created regarding the false disaster fund, using the United Way’s logo. The email sender identified himself as a United Way case manager, and included what appeared to be a valid United Way email address and a phone number. When the number was called, a man answered the phone, “United Way of ____.” The specific United Way that was imitated does not have a disaster fund, and is not providing direct assistance to individuals impacted by the disasters.

These incidents were reported to the state’s Attorney General’s office, the Facebook page was reported and is no longer active, and a conspicuous notification was placed on the United Way’s website and Facebook page to notify the public of the scam. The United Way is cooperating with the Attorney General’s investigation. The incident was reported to the FBI [here](#).

It’s important to note that FEMA posts information on rumors [here](#). Please promote this during times of disaster to help get the word out about legitimate sources of assistance. Remind the public to not respond to unsolicited emails with offers of **any kind** of assistance.

To report any similar occurrences at your organization or any other instances of fraud, please contact:

- Ken Euwema, ken.euwema@uww.unitedway.org, 800-892-2757, x565
- Jenny Palazio, jenny.palazio@uww.unitedway.org, 800-892-2757, x511

For advice and counsel on communications in difficult situations, contact:

- Neil Parekh, neil.parekh@uww.unitedway.org, 800-892-2757, x 356