



U.S. POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE **CRIME ALERT**

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SCAMMERS CASH IN ON JAPAN DISASTER INSPECTORS ADVISE PUBLIC TO CHECK CHARITIES BEFORE GIVING

Not even three hours after an earthquake and tsunami struck Japan, scammers seeking to take advantage of the disaster sprang into action. An estimated 1.7 million Web sites already have been created for fake Japan charities, appearing in search engines under “Japan tsunami,” “Japan relief,” and “Japan donations.”

The scams take many forms: Fraudsters use fake sites and e-mails to rake in donations for personal gain, to harvest e-mail addresses and personal information from users, to send e-mails with viruses that are downloaded to a victim’s computer when opened, or to convince people to pay advance fees in exchange for a larger return once Japanese victims win million-dollar settlements.

In another scam, a link on Facebook to a purported video of a whale being tossed from the ocean into a building leads to a fraudulent YouTube site, which gathers personal information. The link even has a hidden “like” button that, when selected, spreads the scam to others on the user’s Facebook pages.

Postal Inspectors encourage giving a helping hand in times of need, but cautions those who give to make sure they choose a legitimate charity—not one set up for the sole purpose of bilking the public.

Check out organizations you're unfamiliar with by visiting the [Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance Web site](#).

Read more tips about [Charity Fraud](#) on the Postal Inspection Service Web site.

<https://postalinspectors.uspis.gov>