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**SPECIAL ALERT FOR DONORS AND CONSUMERS REGARDING JAPAN  
EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMI RELIEF**

HONOLULU – News of last Thursday's devastating earthquake and tsunami in Japan's northeast coast have many Hawaii residents, businesses and agencies seeking ways they can help. Hawaii residents are known for their generosity, and given the close cultural and historical ties between Hawaii and Japan, Hawaii residents will likely generously donate money to aid in rescue and relief efforts.

Attorney General David Louie today issued this special consumer alert to encourage Hawaii residents to consider donating to relief organizations, but to first verify the donations are made to reputable charities.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims of this tragedy, and I know the people of Hawaii are already looking for ways they can help," Louie said. "Hawaii residents are eager to extend a helping hand in this time of great suffering to our friends in Japan. Unfortunately, if our experience with earlier tragedies is any guide, we suspect that there may be so-called 'charities' that will try to take advantage of donors' generosity by scamming people out of donations intended for disaster victims."

The Department of the Attorney General administers and enforces Hawaii's charitable solicitation and charitable registration requirements and provides oversight of Hawaii's public charities, charitable trusts, and private foundations. Louie urged consumers to consider the following tips before donating to a charity:

\*Don't contribute cash. Make a check or money order payable to the charitable organization, not an individual.

\*Consider giving to organizations that have a strong history in providing disaster relief, and ask about what percentage of the donation will benefit the relief effort.

\*Don't fall for high-pressure tactics. Ask questions, and give only when comfortable that the donation will be applied to help the cause. Remember that legitimate charities won't pressure consumers to donate and will provide as much information as a consumer seeks.

\*To avoid sham solicitations, contact the charity directly before giving a donation by e-mail or to a door-to-door solicitor.

\*Be wary of names that sound similar to reputable organizations. Scam artists may sometimes use names that sound or look like those of respected, legitimate charities.

Finally, Louie encouraged consumers to review the Attorney General's database of registered charitable organizations at the Attorney General's Office website, [www.ag.ehawaii.gov/charity](http://www.ag.ehawaii.gov/charity).

Today, the Federal Trade Commission has issued a special alert regarding the disaster in Japan. <http://ftc.gov/opa/2011/03/earthquake.shtm>. The FTC makes the following recommendations to consumers:

- Ask for the name of the charity if the telemarketer does not provide it promptly;
- Ask what percentage of your donation will support the cause described in the solicitation;
- Verify that the charity has authorized the solicitation;
- Do not provide any credit card or bank information until you have reviewed all information from the charity and made the decision to donate;
- Ask for a receipt showing the amount of the contribution and stating that it is tax deductible; and
- Avoid cash gifts. For security and tax record purposes, it's best to pay by check – made payable to the beneficiary, not the solicitor.

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