

Monday, March 14, 2011

Japan: Disaster Relief Giving Tips

A 9.0 magnitude earthquake struck Japan north of Tokyo on March 11. This disaster was closely followed by an extremely destructive tsunami, destroying several coastal towns. The results have been devastating. Estimates report injuries and fatalities are in the thousands and the death toll is expected to rise. Charities are beginning to solicit and make appeals for donations in an emergency response to help provide relief to those in need. While we all feel an urgent need to help immediately following a massive disaster, some donors are choosing to wait a few days before donating to take the time to thoroughly research the charity(ies) before making a donation decision. If you are considering a donation to charity in response to this disaster, please consider these 6 giving tips:

- **Donate to charities with a track record of success:** Find a charity with a proven track record of success in providing disaster relief on a massive scale and one that has worked in Japan and the other impacted regions.
- **Wait and see; it's okay to say no:** Charities should have a clear plan of how they'll provide aid, and this plan will be listed on their website. Avoid the knee-jerk reaction from Telemarketers and Social Networking sites to donate immediately. Think before you text. Texting is an increasingly popular way to give. But please be aware there may be additional costs to you to make such a gift. And in some cases, can take as much as 90 days for the charity to receive the funds. It is okay to say no to a charity requesting money to take time to do your homework before you give. Simply tell them you wish to learn more about the charity and you will donate directly to the charity when you choose to make a donation.
- **Understand what the charity *actually* does:** Consider what you want your donation to accomplish. Not every charity is responding to the disaster in the same way. Some provide medical assistance, some shelter. Others focus only on children and youth. Some focus on short term relief others on long term rebuilding efforts. And some charities are just helping to fundraise for other charities doing the work.
- **Avoid website scams & verify it is a registered charity:** Although charity scams are few and far between, they do exist. In the United States, Charity Navigator reported that many charity scams appealing for funding during times of disaster are likely to set up bogus websites to steal the identity and money of generous and unsuspecting donors. If you plan to give online, be sure to find the charity's legitimate website and verify it is a registered Canadian charity by visiting the Canada Revenue Agency Charities Directorate <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/lstngs/menu-eng.html>

- **Request audited financial statements** – Charities that are transparent and accountable with how they spend donations will have their audited financial statements (in full, not summarized) posted on their websites or make them readily available to you.
- **Be patient, but hold charities accountable for their results** - It takes time for charities to mobilize, to assess the problems that need to be addressed and to develop effective solutions. Be patient, but also be sure to follow up with the charity in a few months. Find out how your donation was put to use and how that charity has been tracking on its performance against its stated deliverables.

As Canadians, we are tremendously grateful and also highly generous during times of global disaster. I hope this information can help you make an informed giving decision. If you require assistance in understanding information you have received from a charity, please do not hesitate to contact us, we would be happy to help you.

Sincerely,



Bri Trypuc, Donor Services

Be Informed. Give Intelligently. Have Impact.

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