CONSUMER ALERT

DONATIONS TO SUPPORT THE PHILIPPINE SUPER TYPHOON RELIEF EFFORTS

News of the devastating Super Typhoon "Haiyan" that hit the Philippines has many Rhode Island residents, businesses, and agencies seeking ways they can help. Rhode Islanders are known for their generosity, and given the close cultural ties between many members of the Filipino community living in Rhode Island, residents of the State will likely generously donate money to aid in rescue and relief efforts.

The Department of Business Regulation issues this consumer alert to help protect Rhode Island residents considering a donation to Philippines typhoon relief organizations and urges consumers to consider the following tips before donating:

First verify the donations are made to reputable charities.

Donate to charities you know and trust.

Be alert for charities that seem to have sprung up overnight in connection with current events, like a natural disaster.

Consider giving to organizations that have a strong history of providing disaster relief

Do not contribute cash. Make a check or money order payable to the charitable organization, not an individual.

Check out the charity with the Better Business Bureau's (BBB) Wise Giving Alliance, Charity Navigator, Charity Watch, or GuideStar.

Do not fall for high pressure tactics. Ask questions, and give only when you are comfortable that the donation will be applied to help the cause. Legitimate charities will not pressure consumers to donate and will provide as much information as a consumer needs.

Ask if the caller is a paid fundraiser, who they work for, and what percentage of your donation goes to the charity and to the fundraiser. If you do not get a clear answer – or if you do not like the answer you receive – consider donating to a different organization.

Do not give out personal or financial information – including your credit card or bank account number.

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

Check with the Department of Business Regulation at 401-462-9583 to determine if the charity or fundraiser is registered in Rhode Island.