

Unsolicited E-mails a Vehicle for Fraudsters Operating Scams Via Internet

NW3C encourages heightened consumer awareness to avoid falling victim to charitable scams

RICHMOND, VA - FEBRUARY 6, 2003 - Reports have surfaced concerning UNSOLICITED e-mail campaigns requesting donations to various alleged charitable causes in connection with the Columbia Space Shuttle tragedy. These e-mails may contain links to sites collecting credit card information.

Using a charity to scam people is common and, unfortunately, often easy. Consumers should stick to a few basic rules:

- Never pay in cash. Always pay by check and never make it out to an individual.
- Never give your credit card, bank, or Social Security number to someone who calls you on the telephone. Request information to be mailed to your home.

Consumers should ask the following questions if an unsolicited e-mailer/caller is trying to sell them something or asking for money.

- Who are you working for?
- What is the location of the main office?
- Where are you calling from?
- What is your phone number so I can call you back?
- What is your name?
- How did you get my name and phone number?
- How will my money be used and by who?
- What state of federal regulator has oversight on your organization?
- Is your organization registered with the state?
- How much of my money will go for fees and commissions?

"With criminal behavior like this on the rise, consumer awareness should be as well," said Glen B. Gainer III, West Virginia State Auditor and NW3C Chairman of the Board of Directors. "The heart of any scam prevention effort begins with awareness and we are urging the public to have a heightened sense of caution when asked to respond to any unsolicited e-mail."

About NW3C

Funded by a grant from the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance, the NW3C is a non-profit organization that provides a national support network for enforcement agencies involved in the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of economic and high-tech crime.