

# Helping Harvey Victims Without Getting Scammed

The news reports about the Hurricane Harvey victims can really tug at your heart. You may even be moved to donate whatever you can to assist in the relief efforts. Unfortunately, though, that's exactly what many scammers are counting on.

Here's how you can help out without falling prey to scams.

## 1.) Avoid Harvey scams

First, make sure your computer's security systems are updated to the most recent versions. Next, never share personal information with unverified sources. This includes your email username and password that many "must-watch" hurricane Harvey videos demand you provide before watching. Similarly, do not click on any links or download anything from suspicious sources. Finally, it's best not to donate over the phone because it's difficult to verify a charity's authenticity that way.

## 2.) Verify the charity's validity

If you'd like to donate to a specific charity, first determine its validity. Check out the charity on the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance, Charity Navigator or Charity Watch. Be sure the charity's name matches the listed charity exactly.

You can also ask a representative to share details about the charity with you. If they seem reluctant to answer questions, proceed with caution!

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommends checking with the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster for a list of legitimate disaster-relief organizations based in Texas.

## 3.) Reach out on your own

The best way to ensure your money is really going toward intended beneficiaries is to contact the charities yourself. Here are a few legitimate organization accepting funds on behalf of Harvey victims:

- AmeriCares is accepting medicine and supplies for survivors.
- The Salvation Army. You can [donate online](#), by calling 1-800-SAL-ARMY (1-800-725-2769) or by texting STORM to 51555.
- The South Texas Blood and Tissue Center has reported a critical shortage. You can donate by calling (210) 731-5590 or by [visiting their website](#) for more information.
- Carter Blood Care is an organization that assists hospitals in North, Central and East Texas. To donate, call (877) 571-1000 or text DONATE4LIFE to 444-999.
- The Texas Diaper Bank in San Antonio is asking for diapers and wipes. These baby supplies can be personally dropped off or mailed to 5415 Bandera Road, Suite 504, San Antonio, TX 78238.
- To help animals suffering from the disaster, you can visit the Houston Humane Society or the San Antonio Humane Society. The Houston Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

has also set up an animal emergency response hotline, at (713) 861-3010. They are accepting [donations on their website](#).

- The United Way of Greater Houston Flood Relief Fund is helping victims with urgent needs as well as long-term services. [Visit their website to donate](#) or text UWFLOOD to 41444.
- Donate blood to those in need by contacting the following organizations: AABB: (301) 907-6977, American Red Cross: 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767), Armed Services Blood Program: (703) 681-5979.

Be on the lookout for scams and verify every charity you help out. This way, you can give with a full heart and confidence that it will benefit the right people.