

## **BBB Warns That Scammers May Be Chasing Your Wallet In Light Of Recent Storms**

Your home and wallet may take a serious beating when a big storm hits and with several recent storms and tornadoes, Better Business Bureau is warning consumers to be wary of fly-by-night “storm chasers,” as well as fraudulent charities promising to provide relief.

Storm chasers and other door-to-door salespeople often peddle dubious deals that may cost homeowners thousands of dollars and create serious headaches. BBB recommends doing your research to avoid getting taken advantage of by untrustworthy home contractors and the like.

For those who seek to aid in relief, BBB Wise Give Alliance urges donors to check trustworthy charities before making any donations. Not only do Americans need to be concerned about avoiding fraud, they also need to make sure their money goes to competent relief organizations that are equipped and experienced to handle the unique challenges of providing assistance.

“Not only do Americans need to be concerned about avoiding fraud, they need to know that their home contractors and charity relief efforts are legitimate and honorable,” said **Stephen A. Cox, President and CEO of the Council of Better Business Bureaus**. “It’s imperative to find a home contractor and charity that you can trust.”

When looking for a contractor you can trust and when seeking to aid to relief efforts, BBB recommends that homeowners and donors do the following:

**Start Your Search with BBB.** In addition to offering Business Reviews on tens of thousands of contractors—good and bad—across the US, you can also rely on BBB’s [Accredited Business Locator](#) to find trustworthy contractors in your area. BBB accreditation standards require that accredited businesses make a good faith effort to resolve disputes.

**Find trustworthy charities when aiding to relief.** BBB Wise Giving Alliance urges donors to make sure their donations will go to legitimate and reputable charities and relief efforts that have the capability to help those in need. Be cautious when relying on third-party recommendations such as bloggers or other Web sites, as they might not have fully researched the listed relief organizations. Interested donors should visit [www.bbb.org/charity](http://www.bbb.org/charity) to research charities and relief organizations to verify that they are accredited by the BBB and meet the [20 Standards for Charity Accountability](#).

**Recognize the red flags.** Beware of any contractor who uses high pressure sales tactics or requires full payment upfront. Also avoid contractors who require you to get the necessary permits. When looking to make a donation,

be cautious about online giving, especially in response to spam messages and emails that claim to link to a relief organization. In response to the previous natural disasters, there were concerns raised about many Web sites and new organizations that were created overnight allegedly to help victims.

**Vet the contractor carefully.** Verify the business meets all state and local requirements including being licensed, insured and bonded. Also ask the business for references from recent jobs. Confirm whether or not the contractor will be subcontracting the job or relying on their own employees.

**Beware of storm chasers.** In the wake of a storm, fly-by-night repair businesses will solicit work, often door-to-door, in unmarked trucks. They might require advance payment and make big promises on which they won't be able to deliver.

**Seek at least three bids.** Beware of low-ball estimates that may potentially balloon over time or foreshadow shoddy work to come.

**Make sure everything is in writing.** Make sure that the full scope of the work is explained in the contract including cleanup and disposal of waste. All verbal agreements need to be included in the written agreement. Pay close attention to the payment terms, estimated price of materials and labor and any warranties or guarantees.

For more advice on hiring home professionals and for finding a charity you can trust, visit us online at [www.bbb.org/us/consumer-tips-home](http://www.bbb.org/us/consumer-tips-home) and BBB Wise Give Alliance at [www.bbb.org/charity](http://www.bbb.org/charity).