FLORIDA CONSUMER eNEWSLETTER
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# BEWARE OF EBOLA SCAMS

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Ebola epidemic in West Africa has so far claimed the lives of more than 5,000 people. The threat of Ebola is creating panic around the nation, and scammers are using this opportunity to take advantage of consumers' fear and generosity. Following the first reported cases of Ebola in the United States, an increasing number of organizations have popped up, offering "cures" for the disease and providing opportunities to donate to victims of the virus.

Various Ebola-related charity websites and solicitors have emerged following the recent outbreak, many of them claiming that they are raising money to help Ebola victims in West Africa. Some of these are fake charities, while others are providing a minimal amount of the donation towards the intended cause.

Most charities soliciting within the state of Florida are required to register and file financial information with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. If solicited to make a charitable donation to assist with the Ebola crisis, consumers are advised to consider these tips:

- **Today's Headlines Are Tomorrow's Scams**
  All too often, people try to take advantage of others in the wake of a natural disaster, a national crisis and even epidemics; the Ebola outbreak is no exception. Never give to a charity that is unknown or not verified by a reputable source. Request written literature and a copy of the charity's financial report. If a charity does not provide the information requested, think twice about donating.

- **Know Where The Dollars Are Being Spent**
  It is up to the charitable organization to decide how they wish to spend their donations. However, it's important to do research to discover how much of the donations are spent towards general administration and fundraising expenses and how much is left for the program services they claim to support. To see if a charity is properly registered or check their financial history, visit the Gift Giver's Guide at www.800helpfla.com or call 1-800-HELP-FLA.

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is the state's clearinghouse for consumer complaints, protection and information. Consumers who have become victims of can contact the department's consumer assistance line at 1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352) within Florida, 1-800-FL-AYUDA (352-9832) en Español or (850) 410-3800 from outside of Florida or visit www.800helpfla.com.

**Some products being sold online claim they can prevent or treat the Ebola virus. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued a warning to consumers, warning them that there is currently no FDA approved vaccines or drugs for the prevention or treatment of Ebola.**

**Consumers have also received email scams tied to the Ebola outbreak with links stating, "People being quarantined" and "civilian crisis protocol." Clicking on these links may infect your computer with malware.**

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