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Public warned of possible charity scams in wake of Burma Cyclone

The Fraud Advisory Panel is today warning the public to be vigilant for email scams purporting to be from legitimate charities in the wake of the recent Myanmar Cyclone in Burma.

“It is an unfortunate sign of our times that there are fraudsters out there who are willing to take advantage of human suffering in order to scam the general public and divert money from legitimate charities who rely upon donations to fund their important humanitarian work”, said Stephen Hill a Trustee Director of the Fraud Advisory Panel.

The fraudsters attempt to exploit the generosity of people who wish to donate money to relief efforts through emails using the good name of legitimate and often well-known charities to make a lucrative profit.

These ‘phishing’ emails try to lure potential donors into making donations online to fake charity websites.

The emails are a variation of the classic ‘419’ Nigerian scams that have been in circulation for a number of years. These scams try to trick people into disclosing personal and financial information on bogus websites accessed via links embedded in the body of the email.

Similar charity scams appeared following other previous natural and manmade disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the London bombings.

“It is important for members of the public to be aware that these scams exist and to know how to avoid them. If you wish to donate to relief efforts in Burma we recommend that you either contact the charity directly using a publicly-listed telephone number or via an official channel such as the Disasters Emergency Committee”, said Dr Hill.

If you receive an unsolicited email purporting to be from a bona fide charity:

1. Do not reply providing personal and financial information.
2. Do not click on website links embedded in emails.
3. If in doubt, contact the charity concerned by using a publicly listed telephone number or an independently obtained website address. The charity will be happy to advise the best way to donate to its causes.
4. Report any bogus emails to the charity concerned.
5. Use an official channels such as the Disasters Emergency Committee which is an umbrella organisation representing a number of humanitarian aid agencies. Visit www.dec.org.uk.

For Further Information

- Please contact Stephanie Aneto (ICAEW Press Office) on Tel: 020 7920 8616 or Email: Stephanie.aneto@icaew.com or
- Dr Stephen Hill, Trustee Director, Fraud Advisory Panel & e-Crime & Fraud Manager at Chantrey Vellacott DFK (shill@cvcdfk.com).

Note for Editors

1. The Fraud Advisory Panel is a registered charity which raises awareness of the immense human, social and economic damage caused by fraud and helps private and public sectors, as well as the public at large, to fight back (www.fraudadvisorypanel.org). It was established in 1998 by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) which continues to provide valuable support. Since its foundation the Panel has:
 - Raised the profile of fraud helping to push the issue up the policy making agenda
 - Developed major proposals for reform of policing, prosecution and the law
 - Worked to improve business and professional education and training
 - Commissioned important new research, for instance on the extent of fraud, cybercrime and the risk to SMEs
 - Raised awareness through conferences, seminars and the media.

Members are drawn from the legal and accountancy professions, industry associations, financial institutions, government agencies, law enforcement, regulatory authorities and academia.

2. This year the Fraud Advisory Panel is attempting to raise awareness of fraud within and against charities in the United Kingdom and the steps that organisations and individuals can take to protect themselves from the threat of fraud.