

Disaster Scams

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In today's world of rapid communications, disasters (both natural and man-made) are broadcast worldwide very soon after the dust settles. The speed with which the bad news spreads also makes it possible for scammers to try to make money at the expense of those suffering from the disaster.

Beware of solicitations for help for disaster victims. The most recent example was the Japan earthquake and tsunami. Crooks wasted little time sending out false requests for money. Some sites (and emails) solicited funds supposedly to help victims. In reality, the money never got to the victims. Instead, the crooks just smiled all the way to the bank! These sites went so far as to create icons that looked like PayPal links to help the visitors part with their money.

They also set up a number of virus-laden sites that showed up in search engines for people searching for words like "earthquake in Japan." Anyone who clicked on the links in these sites activated a pop-up "scareware" window that tried to frighten victims into believing they had a badly infected PC and must pay to have it removed.

Remember, when you see links either in an e-mail or on a website, run your mouse over the link and look at the bottom of your screen to see where you are really being directed. Don't be a victim yourself!