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HOW TO Evaluate Your Charity Choices | Earth911.com

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How to Evaluate Your Charity Choices

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New charity scams come to light every day. With 1.8 million nonprofits registered in the United States, it is not easy to tell whether a charity you've never heard of is legitimate. How do you make sure your donated money is not going to waste? Whether you're looking for a nonprofit to help clobber climate change or keep water clean, there are resources to help you find the best nonprofit organizations and avoid charity fraud.

Avoiding Scams

According to the Federal Trade Commission, there are several red flags for charity scams. Scammers will try to rush you into donating, may thank you for previous donations you haven't made, and will talk about the cause more than the charity's work. Any references to "sweepstakes" as part of a charity campaign are suspect and may even be illegal. Scammers often use names that sound like better-known charities and fake a local number on caller ID. That's why researching an organization before donating is so important.

Is It Legitimate?

The IRS's [Tax Exempt Organization Search](#) tells you if your donation would be tax deductible. The resources below will help you find out even more about the charity you are considering.

Is It Efficient?

Charity Navigator is the largest charity evaluator in the U.S. They evaluate registered 501(c) (3) charities meeting a minimum size that file a Form 990 with the Internal Revenue Service for seven consecutive years. Charity Navigator examines a charity's financial health and governance. They do not evaluate a charity's effectiveness.