



TRS Newspaper

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Feds: E-Mail Conmen Claim to Be IRS Officials

Everyone is anxious for news of tax refunds and economic stimulus payments, right? Scam artists obviously think so.

Who doesn't want to receive news about their tax refund or economic stimulus payment?

Just click the link in this e-mail, the IRS official apparently requests.

But officials with the U.S. tax-collecting agency say doing so could be a costly mistake.

Scam artists are luring U.S. taxpayers with claims of information about upcoming refunds and payments to collect information they can use for identity theft.

In 2008 so far, taxpayers reported to the IRS more than 1,600 such e-mails, known as "phishing" scams.

"Taxpayers should take steps to keep their personal information out of the hands of identity thieves," IRS Commissioner Doug Shulman said in a statement.

"That includes not falling for any of the phony e-mails or faxes now in circulation pretending to come from the IRS."

In most of these e-mails, the scam artists request detailed personal information. The IRS, however, does not generally send e-mails to taxpayers and never requests security-related personal information, such as PIN numbers or Social Security numbers, from taxpayers.

Among currently circulating scams:

Refund E-Mail Scam: E-mails claiming to come from the IRS informs the recipient he or she is eligible for a tax refund for a specific amount.

Economic Stimulus Payments Scam: A taxpayer receives an e-mail pretending to come from the IRS which tells the recipient he or she is eligible for an economic stimulus payment. The message recommends direct deposit into the taxpayer's bank account. To receive the claimed payment, people

must enter personal and financial data, including bank account numbers that the scammers can use to gain access to the accounts.

Substitute Form 1040 Fax Scam: A cover letter is addressed "Dear Valued Tax Payer (sic)" and appears to be signed by an IRS employee. The letter says that the IRS is updating its files and that recipients who supply the requested information will receive a nominal tax refund.

Company Report Scam: This e-mail appears to come from an irs.gov e-mail address, addresses recipients by name and refers to the company for which the recipient works. These personalized details may convince the recipient the e-mail is legitimate. The e-mail says that the IRS has a report on the company and asks the recipient to review a copy by clicking on a link to download the report. When the link is clicked, malware, or malicious code, is downloaded to the recipient's computer.

Tax Court Scam: An e-mail that appears to come from the U.S. Tax Court and contains a petition involving a court case between the IRS and the recipient. The document instructs the recipient to download other files. The download transfers malware to the recipient's computer.

If you've received a questionable e-mail purporting to be from the IRS, government officials suggest you forward it to phishing@irs.gov.

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