



## IRS Warns Taxpayers of New E-mail Scams

*Updated Jan. 14, 2008 — A new variation of the refund scheme may be directed toward organizations that distribute funds to other organizations or individuals. In an attempt to seem legitimate, the scam e-mail claims to be sent by, and contains the name and supposed signature of, the Director of the IRS Exempt Organizations area of the IRS. The e-mail asks recipients to click on a link to access a form for a tax refund. In reality, taxpayers claim their tax refunds through the filing of an annual tax return, not a separate application form.*

*Updated Nov. 7, 2007 — In a variation, an e-mail scam claims to come from the IRS and the Taxpayer Advocate Service (a genuine and independent organization within the IRS whose employees assist taxpayers with unresolved tax problems). The e-mail says that the recipient is eligible for a tax refund and directs the recipient to click on a link that leads to a fake IRS Web site. The IRS recommends that recipients do not click on links in, or open any attachments to, e-mails they receive that are unsolicited or that come from unknown sources.*

*Updated Nov. 2, 2007 — A new scam e-mail that appears to be a solicitation from the IRS and the U.S. government for charitable contributions to victims of the recent Southern California wildfires has been making the rounds. A link in the e-mail, when clicked, sends the e-mail recipients to a Web site that looks like the IRS Web site, but isn't. They are then directed to click on a link that opens a donation form that asks for personal and financial information. The scammers can use that information to gain access to the e-mail recipients' financial accounts. The IRS does not send e-mails to taxpayers soliciting contributions to a charitable cause.*

*Updated Sept. 19, 2007 — Another recent e-mail scam tells taxpayers that the IRS has calculated their "fiscal activity" and that they are eligible to receive a tax refund of a certain amount. Taxpayers receive a page of, or are sent to, a Web site (titled "Get Your Tax Refund!") that copies the appearance of the genuine "Where's My Refund?" interactive page on the genuine IRS Web site. Like the real "Where's My Refund?" page, taxpayers are asked to enter their SSNs and filing status. However, the phony Web page asks taxpayers to enter their credit card account numbers instead of the exact amount of refund as shown on their tax return, as the real "Where's My Refund?" page does. Moreover, the IRS does not send e-mails to taxpayers to advise them of refunds or to request financial information.*

*Updated Aug. 24, 2007 — The Internal Revenue Service today warned taxpayers of a new phishing scam, in which an e-mail purporting to come from the IRS advises taxpayers they can receive \$80 by filling out an online customer satisfaction survey. The IRS urges taxpayers to ignore this solicitation and not provide any requested information. The IRS does not initiate contact with taxpayers through e-mail.*

*Updated June 19, 2007 — In another recent scam, consumers have received a "Tax Avoidance Investigation" e-mail claiming to come from the IRS' "Fraud Department" in which the recipient is asked to complete an "investigation form," for which there is a link contained in the e-mail, because of possible fraud that the recipient committed. It is believed that clicking on the link may activate a Trojan Horse.*

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WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service today alerted taxpayers to the latest versions of an e-mail scam intended to fool people into believing they are under investigation by the agency's Criminal Investigation division.

The e-mail purporting to be from IRS Criminal Investigation falsely states that the person is under a criminal probe for submitting a false tax return to the California Franchise Tax Board. The e-mail seeks to entice people to click on a link or open an attachment to learn more information about the complaint against them. The IRS warned people that the e-mail link and attachment is a Trojan Horse that can take over the person's computer hard drive and allow someone to have remote access to the computer.

The IRS urged people not to click the link in the e-mail or open the attachment. Similar e-mail variations suggest a customer has filed a complaint against a company and the IRS can act as an arbitrator. The latest versions appear aimed at business taxpayers as well as individual taxpayers.

The IRS does not send out unsolicited e-mails or ask for detailed personal and financial information. Additionally, the IRS never asks people for the PIN numbers, passwords or similar secret access information for their credit card, bank or other financial accounts.

"Everyone should beware of these scam artists," said Kevin M. Brown, Acting IRS Commissioner. "Always exercise caution when you receive unsolicited e-mails or e-mails from senders you don't know."

Recipients of questionable e-mails claiming to come from the IRS should not open any attachments or click on any links contained in the e-mails. Instead, they should forward the e-mails to [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov) (follow the [instructions](#)).

The IRS also sees other e-mail scams that involve tricking victims into revealing private personal and financial information over the Internet, a practice that is known as "phishing" for information.

The IRS and the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration work with the U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team (US-CERT) and various Internet service providers and international CERT teams to have the phishing sites taken offline as soon as they are reported.

Since the establishment of the mail box last year, the IRS has received more than 17,700 e-mails from taxpayers reporting more than 240 separate phishing incidents. To date, investigations by TIGTA have identified host sites in at least 27 different countries, as well as in the United States.

Other fraudulent e-mail scams try to entice taxpayers to click their way to a fake IRS Web site and ask for bank account numbers. Another widespread e-mail tells taxpayers the IRS is holding a refund (often \$63.80) for them and seeks financial account information. Still another email claims the IRS's 'anti-fraud commission' is investigating their tax returns.

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