

IRS News Release

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Treasury, IRS Warn of Identity Theft Scheme Involving Bogus E-mail, Web site

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WASHINGTON—The U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service today warned taxpayers of an e-mail-based scheme that attempts to trick taxpayers into revealing personal information such as social security numbers, driver's license information and bank and credit card numbers.

In this ploy, unsuspecting consumers receive an e-mail, claiming they are under investigation for tax fraud and are subject to prosecution. The e-mail informs recipients they can "help" the investigation by providing "real" information and directs them to an official-looking Web site, <http://deptreas.org/irs/7634//>, where detailed personal information must be provided to dispute the charge.

Identity thieves can use an individual's personal data to take over their financial accounts, run up charges on their credit cards, apply for loans, credit cards or other services in the victim's name and file fraudulent tax returns.

At the request of the IRS and the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA), the Internet service provider that was hosting the Web site has shut the site down. The scheme is being investigated by TIGTA, which addresses threats to federal tax administration.

The bogus IRS web page and the e-mail in this instance contained several grammatical errors, rendering them immediately suspect. However, new versions of the scam could surface in the future, including more effectively-written text and a different destination Web site.

The IRS does not use e-mail to contact taxpayers about issues related to their accounts. Official taxpayer contact usually includes a letter on IRS stationery in an IRS envelope. IRS letters also contain a contact phone number.

Taxpayers who believe they have received suspect communication are encouraged to call TIGTA's toll-free fraud referral hotline at 1-800-366-4484. Taxpayers can also contact the IRS at 1-800-829-1040. An IRS representative will be able to verify the taxpayer's account status and determine whether a communication is legitimate.

Additional information on identify theft and other fraud may be found on the following Web sites: www.consumer.gov/idtheft and www.tigta.gov.