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TIP OF THE WEEK

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SCAMMERS POSING AS THE IRS

As we get into tax season, the IRS is reminding taxpayers to be on the lookout for scam e-mails, texts, and phone calls aimed at tricking you into disclosing personal and financial information that could be used to steal your identity and financial assets. The IRS does not send out unsolicited e-mails, phone calls or texts asking for personal information.

The IRS has seen a recent increase in these scams, many of which originate outside the United States. To date, investigations have identified sites hosting hundreds of IRS-related phishing scams. These scam websites have been found to originate in at least 20 different countries.

Scammers claiming to be from the IRS, tell you that you are due a federal tax refund, and direct you to a website that appears to be a genuine IRS site. The bogus sites contain forms or interactive web pages similar to IRS forms and web pages.

Don't be fooled! These sites and forms have been modified to request detailed personal and financial information from the e-mail recipients. E-mail addresses involving users in professional and educational communities seem to be heavily targeted.

The information obtained is then used to steal the taxpayer identity and financial assets. Typically, identity thieves use someone's personal data to empty the victim's financial accounts, run up charges on the victim's existing credit cards, apply for new loans, credit cards, services, or benefits in the victim's name and even file fraudulent tax returns.

Again, the IRS does not send out unsolicited e-mails or ask for detailed personal information. Additionally, the IRS never asks people for their PIN numbers, passwords or similar secret access information for their credit card, bank, or other financial accounts. The IRS primarily uses the mail when they need to notify you regarding any tax-related matter. They do not phone you late at night, or text you.

For more information on phishing (suspicious e-mails) and identity theft, visit the IRS Web site at www.irs.gov.

For information on preventing or handling the aftermath of identity theft, visit the Federal Trade Commission Web sites at www.consumer.gov/idtheft and www.OnGuardOnline.gov (and click on Topics).

Please report the fraudulent misuse of the IRS name, logo, forms or other IRS property by calling the Treasury inspector General for Tax Administration toll-free hotline at 1-800-366-4484.

For more information and tips, visit our web site at www.lincolncountysheriff.net and Like us on Facebook at Lincoln County Sheriff's Office – Oregon.