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Warning from IRS

In what has become an almost predictable feature of every tax season, there is a phishing scam going around where emails are sent to taxpayers purportedly from the IRS informing them that they are due for a tax refund.

Although this has been often said, it is worth repeating – the IRS does not send out unsolicited emails or ask you to reveal your personal and financial information. Among the information the IRS will never ask you for are your PIN number, bank account numbers, credit card account numbers, passwords or other such confidential access information.

Furthermore, the IRS will never discuss any aspect of your tax account via email. So do not be duped, no matter how bona fide the email looks.

Here are some characteristics of a scam email:

1. It solicits personal details like your name, Social Security number, bank or credit card numbers and security related information like your mother's maiden name.
2. It comes with an incentive such as a tax refund or cash payment to do what the email wants you to do. On the other hand, there may be a consequence if you fail to do what is instructed like additional taxes or blocked access to certain funds.
3. The email usually contains at least one link that points to a URL that

<http://www.getirshelp.com/irsblog/>

does not contain the URL of the IRS which is www.irs.gov. To see the URL behind the link, simply hover your mouse over the link and look at the bottom lower part of your computer screen. It usually shows up at the bottom left.

Here's what to do if you receive a suspicious looking email:

Do not click on any link in it. Links in these emails often lead you to a phony IRS Web site that appears authentic and then tries to get you to reveal personal identifiers, bank or credit card account numbers or PINs. Such a web site may appear legitimate because the appearance and much of the content are actually copied from relevant pages on the IRS web site itself and changed by the scammers to make it say what they want it to say.

If there is any attachment to the email, do not view or download it. The attachment may contain malicious software such as computer viruses.

Forward the email to phishing@irs.gov then delete it.

If you wish to email the IRS, you should do so through the IRS website, www.irs.gov. Alternatively, you can call 1-800-829-1040.