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RINA ALERT!

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A Warning Worth Repeating - The U.S. Internal Revenue Service issues a warning to taxpayers

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The U.S. Internal Revenue Service is warning taxpayers about a "phishing" scheme that uses the promise of a tax refund as a means to steal sensitive personal financial information. Persons who are the target of the scheme will receive an e-mail whose subject line may read "Refund Notice!" The e-mail claims to come from "tax.refunds@irs.gov." but it is, in reality, part of a scam designed to trick users into revealing their personal information including Social Security and credit card numbers.

Typically, the bogus e-mail reports that a refund is waiting for the taxpayer, and provides a hyperlink for the person to click. Some scammers even advise recipients to cut and paste the Web link into their Web browser rather than clicking on it. The link then sends the person to an official looking Web site that asks for your Social Security and credit card numbers.

This illegal practice is called "phishing." Thieves gain access to your personal information and will use it to run up credit card charges or even to open new credit accounts, apply for loans or benefits or file a fraudulent tax return and claim a refund. They may even be able to empty bank accounts.

The IRS never sends out unsolicited emails asking for personal or financial information. Further, credit card information, ATM PIN numbers or similar information would never be required for you to find out the status of tax refunds. Should you receive an e-mail that seems to be from the IRS, do not open any attachments. They may contain viruses that could infect your computer. Do not access the link provided or send any personal information. If you're unsure whether the IRS is attempting to contact you, call toll-free 1-800-829-1040. For more information about tax-related schemes, visit the criminal enforcement page at www.irs.gov

"Phishing" scams are a growing criminal enterprise and are not limited to the scheme described above. Any unsolicited request you receive from any of your vendors including credit card companies and banks should be viewed with the utmost skepticism. **NEVER provide any personal information over the internet in reply to an unsolicited e-mail request.**

One way to detect whether a site is bogus is if it lacks a telephone number for verification and if it has sloppy design and spelling or grammatical errors. You can report questionable sites to the U.S. Federal Trade Commission, 877-382-4357 or at their [Web Site](#)