



For Immediate Release
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*******CONSUMER ALERT*****CONSUMER ALERT*******

**WITH THE TAX DEADLINE LOOMING, MADIGAN WARNS
CONSUMER ABOUT TAX-RELATED E-MAIL SCAMS**

Chicago – As the April 15 tax deadline nears, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan today warned consumers to be on the watch for unsolicited e-mails that may arrive in their computer inboxes claiming to be an official message from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or a tax preparation service.

Madigan said that “phishing” scams, which attempt to obtain consumers’ personal and financial information through fake e-mails, are common during tax season. An unsolicited e-mail purportedly sent by the IRS or a tax preparation service that requests information such as the consumer’s Social Security number and credit and bank account information is very likely a scam, Madigan said.

Common “phishing” scams involve authentic-looking e-mails that direct the reader to a Web site designed to look just like the site of a legitimate business or government office. Once redirected to that site, the consumer is asked for sensitive account information to “update” or “validate” his account information for some urgent reason.

In the case of tax-related scams, the e-mail recipient may be told that he needs to verify certain financial information before his tax return can be deposited in his bank account. But according to the IRS, the agency does not communicate with taxpayers electronically and consumers should disregard any e-mail that purportedly comes from the agency. If in doubt, consumers may call the IRS toll-free at 1-800-829-1040 to determine the legitimacy of a notice.

“With a large number of taxpayers taking advantage of the convenience of filing their taxes electronically, we are concerned that alarm bells may not immediately go off if they receive a tax-related e-mail,” Madigan said. “However, consumers should be alarmed whenever unsolicited e-mails ask them to divulge personal or financial information.”

Madigan said that in addition to the phony IRS e-mails, consumers should be aware that they may receive fraudulent solicitations allegedly from tax preparation companies offering online tax preparation services. In these cases, the taxpayer is steered to a fake company Web site that asks for personal financial information.

Incidents regarding “phishing” and other identity theft scams should be reported to Madigan’s new Identity Theft Hotline at 1-866-999-5630. The TTY number is 1-877-844-5491. Madigan’s hotline, activated last month, is the first of its kind in the nation, offering a dedicated toll-free number staffed by advocates specially trained to help victims repair their credit, dispute fraudulent debts and prevent future victimization.

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