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TAXPAYERS' HELP NEEDED TO SHUT DOWN ILLEGAL EMAIL SCHEMES INVOLVING ECONOMIC STIMULUS PAYMENTS

DENVER - The United States Attorney's office, the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) and the Internal Revenue Service today released the following warning regarding Internet and email schemes involving the Economic Stimulus Payments.

Wide-spread email schemes, known as "phishing," that claim to come from the IRS have become increasingly common. These emails appear to be legitimate, often bearing the official seal and logo of the IRS. These schemes have covered a variety of subjects, including tax refunds, audit notices, un-cashed Treasury checks and most recently economic stimulus payments. In each of these schemes, the email requests that you provide personal or financial information. Often there will be a link in the email where the recipient can enter the requested information. The purpose is clear – to defraud individuals and businesses of their money and identity information. Between November 2005 to September 2007, TIGTA and the IRS received 32,576 complaints or inquires nationwide regarding these schemes.

"No credible or reputable business will ask you for your personal identification information," said Troy A. Eid, United States Attorney for the District of Colorado. "Crooks are savvy, especially when it comes to the Internet. The U.S. Attorney's Office continues to prosecute those who defraud Coloradans."

Terry Peacock, Special Agent in Charge for the TIGTA office headquartered in Denver advised that his office has received 35 complaints specifically from Colorado taxpayers. "Awareness is the best defense against these schemes. If taxpayers recognize these scams for what they are it will prevent the loss of their personal and financial information," Mr. Peacock said.

Those who have received a questionable e-mail claiming to come from the IRS may forward it (unaltered) to the IRS at phishing@irs.gov or go to www.irs.gov and click on the bottom of the first page "Phishing and E-mail Scams". Following these instructions will help the IRS and TIGTA track the suspicious e-mail to its origins and shut down the scheme. TIGTA investigates groups or individuals who impersonate the IRS. If you have paid money or provided personal or financial information to someone who falsely claimed to work for or represent the IRS, report the incident to TIGTA at 1-800-366-4484.

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