

IRS warns about phony promise of more stimulus cash

January 22, 2009

The Town Talk

By Robert Morgan

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If you are one of those people who has gotten an e-mail message supposedly from the IRS urging you to provide information via the Internet or reply by e-mail "to receive a Stimulus Payment," the Internal Revenue Service has simple instructions - don't do it.

The IRS never sends e-mail about your taxes, according to spokesperson Deirdre Harris.

Harris said the e-mail solicitation "is a scam. IRS will not send any unsolicited e-mails."

The IRS has received reports of an e-mail "that appears to come from the IRS" but is actually a scam that could result in

identity theft or damage to an individual's personal computer, she said.

According to an e-mail received at The Town Talk, "After the last annual calculation of your fiscal activity we have determined that you are eligible to receive a Stimulus Payment. Please submit the Stimulus Payment Online Form in order to process it."

But Harris said, "If you have accessed a link or attachment in a scam e-mail, you may have allowed the scammer to download malicious software to your computer. You should immediately scan for viruses and spyware, plus be alert for suspicious activity on your financial accounts."

Anyone who responded to a scam e-mail and provided private information should take steps immediately to prevent

identity theft, she said.

Regardless of the approach used by scammers, she said people should remember two things:

--The IRS never sends e-mails about your taxes.

--If you get a scam e-mail, don't access any links or attachments.

Helen Harrad, manager of the H&R Block office, a tax preparing service, at 3758 MacArthur Drive, said she has been preparing tax forms for 17 years and she has never known the IRS to send tax forms or notices via the Internet or e-mail.

"They're going to send you something in the (U.S. Postal Service) mail," Harrad said.

Anyone receiving requests for information or notice

of a payment electronically should be "very, very leery," she said, adding the person should check out the message thoroughly before taking any action.

Harris recommended that anyone receiving a scam e-mail should contact the IRS at www.irs.gov for instructions on reporting the scam and preserving the e-mail message so that it can be backtracked to the sender.

At the same site, individuals may obtain additional information about tax scams and assistance in protection against identity theft, she said.

Finally, she said, "Technically, the Economic Stimulus Payments are over and for 2009, taxpayers will be receiving, if eligible, the Recovery Rebate Credit."