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Sent: Tuesday, December 06, 2005 12:31 PM
To: Murdo, Patricia; Jensen, Cort
Subject: Phishing scam

The IRS issued a statement Wednesday Nov. 30, warning consumers of the scam e-mail messages, which appears to come from taxrefunds@irs.gov and contains a link to a phishing Web site that collects Social Security and credit card information. The e-mail says that the IRS owes the recipient a tax refund of several hundred dollars and provides a Web link to a location where they can supposedly claim their refund.

The Web link claims to point to a page on the GovBenefits.gov website. However the link that is provided will bounce the user to the scammer's site where they will request personal and financial data.

GovBenefits.gov is a legitimate Web portal that pulls together information from 10 federal agencies, including the Departments of Labor, Agriculture, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, State, Veterans Affairs, and the Social Security Administration. The portal was apparently designed to forward visitors to different government Web sites, but doesn't limit forwarding to pages in the .gov domain, which leaves open the potential for scams of this type.

The IRS issued the warning days after being informed of the scam and wanted to inform consumers that the agency does not ask for personal information in unsolicited e-mail messages. The e-mail makes for a potent attack when coupled with a convincing phishing Web page and the "rabid excitement" of consumers who believe they are getting a windfall payment from the government.

Consumers who received an e-mail regarding a refund should call the IRS and determine whether or not they were being contacted about a refund, the IRS said.

With the upcoming tax season, I wanted to make people aware of this scam as soon as possible.

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