IRS WARNS OF SCHEME TO STEAL IDENTITY AND FINANCIAL DATA

WASHINGTON – The Internal Revenue Service warned today of a fraudulent scheme currently circulating that uses fictitious bank correspondence and IRS forms in an attempt to trick taxpayers into disclosing their personal and banking data. The information fraudulently obtained is then used to steal the taxpayer’s identity and bank account deposits.

The IRS has received reports of the scam surfacing from coast-to-coast, including in Maine, New York, Georgia, North Carolina, Texas, California and the state of Washington. Dozens of U.S. and foreign victims have been identified so far.

In this scam, a letter claiming to be from the taxpayer’s bank states that the “bank” is updating its records in order to exempt the taxpayer from reporting interest or having tax withheld on interest paid on his or her bank accounts or other financial dealings.

Legally, banks must report interest to the IRS and taxpayers must include it as income.

The “bank” correspondence encloses a phony form that purports to come from the IRS and seeks detailed personal and financial data. The letter urges the recipient to fax the completed form to a specific number within 7 days or lose the reporting and withholding exemption, resulting in withholding of 31% on the account’s interest. The scheme promoters then use the faxed information to impersonate the taxpayer and gain access to the taxpayer’s finances.

One such phony form is labeled “W-9095, Application Form for Certificate Status/Ownership for Withholding Tax.” The form requests personal data frequently used to prove identity, including passport number and mother’s maiden name. It also asks for sensitive financial data such as bank account numbers, passwords and PIN numbers that can be used to gain access to the accounts.

The fictitious W-9095 appears to be an attempt to mimic the genuine IRS Form W-9, “Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification.” The only personal information a genuine W-9 requests is the name, address and Social Security number or employer identification number of the taxpayer.

Another form used in the scam is Form W-8BEN, “Certificate of Foreign Status of Beneficial Owner for United States Tax Withholding.” There is a legitimate IRS Form W-8BEN,
which is used by banks to ensure that their non-U.S. customers meet the criteria to remain exempt from tax reporting requirements. However, the W-8BEN used by the scam promoters has been altered to ask for personal information much like the W-9095. This altered form targets residents of foreign countries who bank in the United States.

Another totally fictitious IRS form used in this scam is labeled “W-8888.” It too asks for information similar to the phony W-9095 and W-8BEN.

The real Forms W-9 and W-8BEN can be found on the IRS’s Web site at www.irs.gov.

The Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration investigates a wide variety of offenses, including the misuse of IRS insignia, seals and symbols and identity theft related to tax administration. Taxpayers who have received a fraudulent letter and form should report this to TIGTA by calling the toll-free fraud referral hotline at 1-800-366-4484, faxing a complaint to 202-927-7018 or writing to the TIGTA Hotline, P.O. Box 589, Ben Franklin Station, Washington, D.C. 20044-0589. TIGTA’s Web site is located at www.ustreas.gov/tigta.

Identity theft is a federal crime under the Identity Theft and Assumption Deterrence Act of 1998. Violations of the Act are investigated by federal agencies such the U.S. Secret Service, the FBI and the Postal Inspection Service and are prosecuted by the Department of Justice. Use of the U.S. mail to commit fraud is another federal crime investigated by the Postal Inspection Service.

Identity thieves can use someone’s personal data to:

- Take over his or her financial accounts.
- Run up charges on the victim’s existing credit cards.
- Apply for loans, credit cards, services or benefits in the victim’s name.
- File fraudulent tax returns.

People who receive the fraudulent letter and form in the mail should immediately contact TIGTA and their financial institution about the attempted fraud. Those who have already been victimized by this scheme should contact the fraud or security department of their creditors, banks and financial institutions, as well as TIGTA and their local police department and postal inspector’s office, to report the identity and financial theft.

Additionally, victims should report the identity and financial theft to the fraud units of the 3 credit reporting bureaus:

- Equifax Credit Information Services, Consumer Fraud Division (800-525-6285)
- Experian (888-397-3742)
- Trans Union Fraud Victim Assistance Department (800-680-7289)

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A copy of the scam letter and phony W-9095 may be found on the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency’s Web site at www.occ.treas.gov. Additional information on identity theft, mail fraud and investigative responsibilities may be found on the following Web sites:

- www.ustreas.gov/tigta
- www.usps.com/postalinspectors/fraud/identitytheft
- www.consumer.gov/idtheft
- www.secretservice.gov/financial_crimies
- www.occ.treas.gov

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FORM W-8BEN (NRA Recertification)
Request for Recertification of Foreign Status
(October 2010)

W-8BEN
( Substitute form)
Certificate of Foreign Status of Beneficial Owner
For United States Tax Withholding

Part I
Identification of Beneficial Owner

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Name of individual or organization that is the beneficial owner</td>
<td>2. Sex: □ male □ female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Type of beneficial owner</td>
<td>□ Individual □ Corporation □ Complex Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Simple Trust □ Grantor Trust □ Central Bank of issue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Government □ International organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Tax-exempt organization □ Private foundation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Date of Birth
5(a). Nationality: 5(b). Place of Birth:
6. Country of permanent Residence
7. Mothers Maiden Name:
8(a). Spouse Name: 8(b). Spouse date of Birth:
9. Permanent resident address (street, apt, or suite no, or rural route). Do not use a P.O.box or In-care of address
City or town, state or province, include postal code where appropriate
Country (do not abbreviate)
10. USA Resident/Mailing address (if any)
City or town, state or province, include postal code where appropriate
Country (USA)
11. Social Security Number, (if any) / Cedular de Identidad no □SSN or ITIN □EIN
12. Profession:
13. Day time phone or fax Number / email (ACTIVE)
14(a). Bank Name(s):
15. Account number(s):
16. Branch Address:
17. Date Account(s) was opened:
18. How often do you come to USA and when did you arrive last?
19. ATTACH PHOTOCOPY OF PASSPORT FOR PROPER IDENTIFICATION

Part II
Certification of Beneficiary Owner

Under penalties of perjury, I decided that I have examined the information on this form to the best of my knowledge and believe it is true, correct and complete. I furthermore certify under penalties of perjury that:
. I am the beneficial owner (or am authorized to sign for the beneficial owner) of all the income to which this form relate.
. The beneficial owner is not a U.S person.
. The income to which this form relates is not effectively connected with the conduct of a trade or business in the United States or is effectively connected but subject to tax under an income tax treaty, and
. For broker transaction or barter exchanges, the beneficial owner is an exempt foreign person as defined in the instructions.
Furthermore, I authorized this form to be provided to any withholding agent that has control, receipt or custody of the income of which I am the beneficial owner or withholding agent that can disburse or make payments of the income of which I am the beneficial owner.

The Internal Revenue Service does not require your consent to any provisions of this document other than the Certifications required to establishing your status as a non-U.S person and, if applicable, obtain a reduced rate of withholding.

Sign Here
(Signer #1) signature of beneficial owner or individual authorized to sign for beneficial owner Date

Sign Here
(Signer #2) signature of beneficial owner or individual authorized to sign for beneficial owner Date

SEND TO FAX NO: +1-206-309-9620
Dear Sir,

Our records indicate that you are a non-resident alien. As a result, you are exempted from United States of America Tax reporting and withholdings, on interest paid you on your account and other financial dealing to protect your exemption from tax on your account and other financial benefit in rectifying your exemption status.

Therefore, you are to authenticate the following by completing form W-8BEN, and return to us as soon as possible through the fax number: +1-206-309-9620

If you are a USA Citizen and resident, this form W-8BEN is not meant for you, please indicate “USA Citizen/Resident” on the form and return it to us. We shall then send you a form W9095.

When completing form W-8BEN, please follow the steps below

1. We need you to provide your permanent address if different from the current mailing address on your Form W-8BEN, you must indicate if a non-USA resident, your country of origin to support your non-resident status (if your bank account or other financial dealing has a USA address for mailing purpose).

2. If any joint account holder are now USA residents or Citizen, or in any way subject to USA tax reporting laws, Please check the box in this section.

3. Please have all account holders, sign and date the form separately and fax it to the above-mentioned number.

Please, complete Form W-8BEN ‘attached’ and return to us within 1 (one) week from the receipt of this letter by faxing it, to enable us update your records immediately if your account or any other financial benefits are not rectified in a timely manner, it will be subject to USA tax reporting and back up withholding (if back up withholding applies, we are required to withhold 30% of the interest paid to you).

We appreciate your cooperation in helping us protect your exempt status and also update our records.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

David Smith
Director of Information