



Department of Communications

401 Broadway • Suite 211 • Gary, Indiana 46402-1236

Phone 219.881.1314 • Fax 219.881.1337

Email ldburns@ci.gary.in.us

Karen Freeman-Wilson
Mayor

LaLosa Dent Burns
Director of Communications

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CITY URGES RESIDENTS TO BE AWARE OF CYBER FRAUD SCHEMES TARGETING TAXPAYERS

Gary, Indiana-As the range of cyber fraud schemes continues to expand, taxpayers are warned that criminals are busy during this tax season. The city of Gary urges residents to be aware of these schemes and requests for personal information through emails.

Reports indicate a number of schemes are occurring where criminals are impersonating Internal Revenue Service (IRS) employees and are demanding tax payments through emails. Some reported emails have included links or attachments that contain a software designed to compromise computers, steal personal or financial information, other documents or to simply steal money. Criminals are also posing as tax service technical support professionals and law enforcement officials offering either assistance in computer repair or in recovering losses.

Taxpayers are also advised that while some emails display the IRS logo and replicate the language used by government agencies, the IRS does not contact taxpayers by email, text messages or through any social media channel to request personal or financial information.

Points to Remember:

- Do not respond to email requests for personal or financial information even if it appears to be legitimate. Validate the email request with the sender: Either visit the IRS office in person or by telephone using a known number.
- Do not click on links or attachments from email addresses you do not recognize. This will help to protect your computer from danger.
- Do not reply to emails. Not replying will help prevent the criminal from gaining your information.

Reports also show that businesses should be aware and are alerted to these cyber fraud schemes. Human Resources departments have been targeted as well via email, in an effort to obtain employee W-2 statements and tax filings. This scheme allows the criminal to steal personal information about a taxpayer. Not only can the employees be victimized by this cyber fraud, but businesses can suffer greatly from the costly effects of this crime.

To report suspicious emails claiming to be from the IRS, residents are encouraged to forward the entire email to phishing@irs.gov. The original email should also be deleted.

For information about identity theft or for questions relative to data breaches and taxes visit the IRS at irs.gov/newsroom/taxpayer-guide-to-identity-theft. Fraud-prevention training and webinars are available through local banks. Residents should contact banking institutions directly for more information.