

Phishing is Taxing Work

We are well into tax season and that means there are people, other than the IRS, wanting your money. Email messages about tax refunds that claim to be from the IRS are phishing scams. Phishing is an attack whereby the email recipient is lead to believe something good will happen if they provide detailed financial information. The IRS related scams often appear to have been sent from an irs.gov email address. The email address is forged.



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This is an example of a common IRS related phishing attack:

After the last annual calculations of your fiscal activity we have determined that you are eligible to receive a tax refund of \$79.80. Please submit the tax refund request and allow us 6-9 days in order to process it.

A refund can be delayed for a variety of reasons. For example submitting invalid records or applying after the deadline.

To access the form for your tax refund, please [click here](#).

*Regards,
Internal Revenue Service*

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When you "Click here" you will be taken to a web site that probably looks very official and asks you to enter all of the information required to start draining your bank account or to begin engaging in identity theft.

If you go to the web site <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=167983,00.html> you can see the "Dirty Dozen" for tax scams. Currently telephone excise tax fraud and Roth IRA fraud ahead of phishing, but phishing is the top online tax fraud scam.

As you may have guessed, but I'll tell you anyway – the IRS does not send you email to tell you that you owe them money or to tell you that they owe you money. On the same web page referenced above you can find this sage advice:

"... the IRS does not use e-mail to initiate contact with taxpayers about issues related to their accounts. If a taxpayer has any doubt whether a contact from the IRS is authentic, the taxpayer should call 1-800-829-1040 to confirm it."

Despite "income tax day" being in April, these scams are sighted year round. In a completely unscientific poll of phishing reports I have seen, March, June and July seem to be the busiest phishing months, but January is the only month of the year for which I received no reports.

As always, feel free to send questions or comment to askeset@eset.com



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