



Rhode Island Department of Revenue

Division of Taxation

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TAX ADMINISTRATION

ADVISORY FOR TAX PROFESSIONALS
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Security Summit warns tax professionals about scam

Cybercriminals use phishing email made to look as if it's from a tax preparer education firm

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – The Rhode Island Division of Taxation, the Internal Revenue Service, and the tax industry are warning tax professionals to beware of phishing emails purporting to be from a tax software education provider and seeking extensive amounts of sensitive preparer data.

The IRS, the Rhode Island Division of Taxation, tax agencies from other states, and the tax industry are working together as the Security Summit, implementing a series of initiatives to help guard against refund fraud and tax-related identity theft. Security Summit partners note that cybercriminals worldwide are actively targeting tax professionals in an effort to steal taxpayer information.



Although the origin of this latest email is unknown, Security Summit partners believe that it is probably being issued by cybercriminals who could be operating from the United States or abroad.

The email is unusual for the amount of sensitive preparer data that it seeks. This preparer information will enable the thieves to steal client data and file fraudulent tax returns.

The Security Summit reminds all tax professionals that legitimate businesses and organizations never ask for usernames, passwords, or sensitive data via email. Nor should a preparer ever provide such sensitive information via email if asked.

All tax professionals should be aware that their e-Services credentials, the Electronic Filing Information Number (EFIN), the Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN), and the Centralized Authorization File (CAF) number are extremely valuable to identity thieves. Anyone handling taxpayer information has a legal obligation to protect that data.

Because Security Summit partners are making inroads on individual tax-related identity theft, cybercriminals increasingly target tax professionals. Thieves are looking for real client data so they can better impersonate the taxpayer when filing fraudulent returns for refunds.

What the fake email looks like

The fake email uses the name of a real U.S.-based preparer education firm. The box below contains the text as it appears in phishing emails being sent to tax professionals:

In our database, there is a failure, we need your information about your account.

In addition, we need a photo of the driver's license, send all the data to the letter. Please do it as soon as possible, this will help us to revive the account.

*Company Name *
*EServices Username *
*EServices Password *
*EServices Pin *
CAF number
Answers to a secret question
*EIN Number *
*Business Name
*Owner/Principal Name *
*Owner/Principal DOB *
*Owner/Principal SSN *
*Prior Years AGI
Mother's Maiden Name

If you received or fell victim to the scam email, forward a copy to phishing@irs.gov. If you disclosed any credential information, contact the IRS e-Services Help Desk to reset your password: <https://www.irs.gov/uac/e-help-desk-toll-free-number>. If you disclosed information and taxpayer data was stolen, contact your local IRS stakeholder liaison: <https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/stakeholder-liaison-local-contacts-1>.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Division of Taxation is located on the first floor of the Powers Building, at One Capitol Hill in Providence, diagonally across from the Smith Street entrance of the State House. The Division is typically open to the public from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. business days. The main phone number is (401) 574-8829. (For questions about personal income tax, choose option # 3.) To see a list of phone numbers and email addresses to various sections within the agency, use the following link: <http://www.tax.ri.gov/contact/>. For refund status, see: <https://www.ri.gov/taxation/refund/>. (The Division of Taxation cannot directly respond to taxpayer inquiries via social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, because of State statutes protecting taxpayer confidentiality. For the same reason, individual taxpayer inquiries cannot be directly addressed when made through traditional media, such as TV stations and talk-show programs.)