



IDAHO
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NEWS RELEASE

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STATE WARNS AGAINST FRAUDULENT NCUA EMAILS

BOISE, IDAHO -- Gavin Gee, Director of the Idaho Department of Finance, is warning Idaho residents about an email "Phishing" scam that purports to be an account verification inquiry from the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA), the entity that insures federal and state-chartered credit unions.

Gee said that the false email was designed to get the recipient to click on a link to verify their account registration. If the recipient proceeded to do so, the link directed them to a false website and asked for their credit union account number and PIN. Gee said that although the false website has been shut down, he is concerned about Idaho consumers who may have unwittingly provided sensitive personal financial information to the perpetrators of this "Phishing" scam.

For consumers who may have fallen victim to this scam, Gee recommends that they immediately contact their financial institution and take whatever action is necessary to protect their account against identity thieves, including changing their account's PIN. "Unfortunately, identity theft is a continuing problem in our society, and consumers must be vigilant to avoid falling victim to these high-tech thieves," Gee said.

In 2004, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) received more than 246,000 reports of identity theft, comprising 39% of the total complaints received. At least 600 of these complaints came from Idahoans. Those whose identities have been stolen can spend thousands of dollars and many years clearing up their good name and credit. In Idaho, identity theft is a criminal act. In addition, Idaho has implemented civil remedies for victims of this crime.

"One of the objectives of the Idaho Department of Finance," said Gee, "is to provide education to promote financial literacy of Idaho citizens." He recommends that Idaho consumers follow these tips, from the website of the FTC, to avoid phishing scams and identity theft:

CONSUMER FINANCE BUREAU
700 West State Street, 2nd Floor, Boise, ID 83702
Mail To: P.O. Box 83720, Boise ID 83720-0031
Phone: (208) 332-8002 Fax: (208) 332-8099
<http://finance.idaho.gov>

PROTECTING THE INTEGRITY OF IDAHO FINANCIAL MARKETS

- If you get an email or pop-up message that asks for personal or financial information, do not reply or click on the link in the message. Legitimate companies don't ask for this information via email. If you are concerned about your account, contact the organization in the email using a telephone number you know to be genuine, or open a new Internet browser session and type in the company's correct Web address. In any case, don't cut and paste the link in the message.
- Don't email personal or financial information. Email is not a secure method of transmitting personal information. If you initiate a transaction and want to provide your personal or financial information through an organization's Web site, look for indicators that the site is secure, like a lock icon on the browser's status bar or a URL for a website that begins "https:" (the "s" stands for "secure"). Unfortunately, no indicator is foolproof; some phishers have forged security icons.
- Review credit card and bank account statements as soon as you receive them to determine whether there are any unauthorized charges. If your statement is late by more than a couple of days, call your credit card company or bank to confirm your billing address and account balances.
- Use anti-virus software and keep it up to date. Some phishing emails contain software that can harm your computer or track your activities on the Internet without your knowledge. Anti-virus software and a firewall can protect you from inadvertently accepting such unwanted files. Anti-virus software scans incoming communications for troublesome files. Look for anti-virus software that recognizes current viruses as well as older ones; that can effectively reverse the damage; and that updates automatically.
- A firewall helps make you invisible on the Internet and blocks all communications from unauthorized sources. It's especially important to run a firewall if you have a broadband connection. Finally, your operating system (like Windows or Linux) may offer free software "patches" to close holes in the system that hackers or phishers could exploit.
- Be cautious about opening any attachment or downloading any files from emails you receive, regardless of who sent them.
- Report suspicious activity to the FTC. If you get spam that is phishing for information, forward it to spam@uce.gov. If you believe you've been scammed, file your complaint at www.ftc.gov, and then visit the FTC's Identity Theft Web site at www.consumer.gov/idtheft to learn how to minimize your risk of damage from ID theft. Visit www.ftc.gov/spam to learn other ways to avoid email scams and deal with deceptive spam.



The Idaho Department of Finance is devoted to the regulation of Idaho's financial markets and to the financial education of all Idaho citizens. Department of Finance Press Releases and other information can be found on the Internet via the worldwide web at <http://finance.idaho.gov> and may be obtained by contacting the Department at (208) 332-8004 or Idaho toll-free at 1-888-346-3378.