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Fight Fraud Taskforce warns: Don't fall for Stimulus Scams! **Learn how to protect yourself.**

Las Vegas –The Fight Fraud Taskforce is warning Nevadans to watch out for stimulus scams, which take advantage of the publicity surrounding the federal stimulus package in order to steal consumers' money and personal data.

Con artists are using e-mail and the Internet to perpetrate these scams. In one type of email scam, the message claims to be from the Internal Revenue Service and asks for sensitive personal data like bank account information or a Social Security number in order for the IRS to process your "stimulus check". This is the first red flag. Most likely, you'll receive that money by having less withheld from your paycheck. Otherwise, if you're qualified to receive a Social Security check, the government will mail it directly to you. You don't need to apply for it. The second red flag is that the federal government will never contact you by email or phone regarding rebates, refunds or stimulus money. If you provide your information, you may become a victim of identity theft.

Other bogus e-mail messages contain links that, when clicked, launch malicious software or spyware - programs that can retrieve personal information, like credit card numbers, from personal computers.

Some of these scams use the U.S. mail instead of email. There are a couple of variations of this scam, but it always includes a check that looks real and is supposedly a stimulus check.

Consumers are instructed to deposit the check and to wire a certain amount back – either to enter a required "participation program" or to get a larger stimulus refund or to get information on how to use stimulus money to buy foreclosed properties in their area. Of course, the check is fake. If you deposit it, you are out the money sent to the scammer, AND you owe the bank the amount of the check plus fees.

Also beware of grant scams that claim to show you how to get large amounts of money in free government grants. If you order the CD offered, your credit card will likely be charged repeatedly, and again you may be setting yourself up for identity theft down the road. There's no such thing as free money. To get the real scoop on government grants, visit <http://www.grants.gov>.

To protect yourself, thoroughly check the business out before parting with your money. Research the company on the Internet, but be careful of false websites and blogs with testimonials. Talk to friends and family. Review the Better Business Bureau's reliability reports. Contact the Nevada Consumer Affairs Division (<http://www.fyiconsumer.org/index.htm>) or the Nevada Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer Protection (<http://ag.state.nv.us/org/bcp/bcp.htm>) to see if any complaints have been filed.

- Do not click on e-mail links or open e-mail attachments if you don't know the sender.
- If the e-mail offers jobs, contact the company's human resources department to make sure the job openings really exist.
- Do not provide personal information in e-mail forms.
- If you do fall for a potential scam, double check your credit card statements for unauthorized charges and dispute the charges with the company.
- Contact your bank and local police department as well.
- For the facts on the President's plan, visit <http://www.recovery.gov>.

For more information on these scams, visit the Fight Fraud website at <http://fightfraud.nv.gov/StimulusScams.htm>. The site also includes extensive tips on how to prevent other kinds of fraud and provides downloadable complaint forms to help you respond effectively if you become a victim. Visit it regularly for the latest fraud alerts.

The statewide Fight Fraud Taskforce includes members from the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department and other local law enforcement agencies, the Nevada Division of Motor Vehicles, the Internal Revenue Service, the Nevada Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer Protection, the Nevada Consumer Affairs Division, the Public Utilities Commission, the U.S. Postal Service, the Federal Trade Commission and experts from the private sector.

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