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Attorney General

CONSUMER ALERT

Rhode Island Office of the Attorney General

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More than 50 Consumers Alert Office of Attorney General of Latest “IRS Scam” Calls to Rhode Islanders

After receiving more than 50 calls today from consumers reporting that they had been contacted by the IRS, Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin is reminding consumers that it is a scam, and he is providing tips to help people avoid falling victim to what has become one of the most persistent scams ever to hit Rhode Island.

If you get a call from someone who claims to be with the IRS asking you to pay back taxes, here's what you should do:

- Hang up!
- Call and report the incident to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration at 800-366-4484 or at www.tigta.gov.
- Never provide any bank account or other personal or financial information to a person or company that you don't know.
- Do not wire money to a person or company you don't know.
- Do not give the caller money using a pre-paid debit card.
- Alert the Office of Attorney General by calling the Consumer Protection Unit at 401-274-4400.

According to many consumers who have reported the scam to the Consumer Protection Unit at the Office of Attorney General, the calls appear to be from 509 or 206 area codes. The calls are being received on traditional land lines and cell phones, and if they don't reach a person on the phone, the scammers will leave a voicemail indicating they are calling from the IRS and need to speak with the person immediately.

The scammers are known to threaten arrest, driver's license suspension, a lawsuit, or even deportation if payment for back taxes allegedly owed is not made immediately. The callers demand that payment be made in the form of a pre-paid debit card, wire transfer, credit card, or authorized bank account withdrawal. Several consumers have reported the scammers will get rude, aggressive and even use vulgar language in hopes of scaring the consumer into paying.

“No matter if the area code is 509, 206 or even 401, the number one give away that the call is a scam is that the IRS won't call out of the blue to ask for payment, won't demand a specific form of payment, and won't leave a message threatening to sue you if you don't pay right away,” said Attorney General Kilmartin. “We have seen these scammers escalate their aggressive behavior, which is very concerning as some folks, especially seniors, may fall victim to this type of approach. It is important that those with senior parents, relatives or neighbors share with them how this scam works and what to do if they receive a phone call from these scammers.”

About the Office of the Attorney General Consumer Protection Unit

The Office of the Attorney General Consumer Protection Unit investigates and mediates consumer complaints concerning unfair and unlawful business practices and misleading advertising arising out of alleged violations of the Deceptive Trade Practices Act. If groups of people are victimized by a deceptive trade practice, this office may file in the Superior Court a civil investigative demand, which is a formal investigation. In appropriate cases, a lawsuit to stop the illegal business practice may be initiated.

Apart from carrying out its statutory responsibilities, the Unit also provides information and referral services to the general public. Consumers are directed to the appropriate governmental or private agencies for help in answering specialized questions or resolving disputes that are not within the Unit's jurisdiction.

The Consumer Protection Unit is available to speak to community groups on how to prevent being a victim of identity theft and other scams. For more information, please visit www.riag.ri.gov or call 401-274-4400.

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