



IRS Alerts Payroll and HR Professionals to Phishing Scheme Involving W-2s

WASHINGTON DC, March 8, 2016 — The Internal Revenue Service has issued an alert to payroll and human resources professionals to beware of an emerging phishing email scheme that purports to be from company executives and requests personal information on employees.

The IRS has learned that this scheme—part of the surge in phishing emails seen this year—already has claimed several victims as payroll and human resources offices mistakenly emailed payroll data, including W-2 forms that contain Social Security numbers and other personally identifiable information, to cybercriminals posing as company executives.

"If your CEO appears to be emailing you for a list of company employees, check it out before you respond. Everyone has a responsibility to be diligent in confirming the identity of people requesting personal information about employees."

This is a new twist on an old scheme using the cover of the tax season and W-2 filings to trick people into sharing personal data. Now the criminals are focusing their schemes on company payroll departments, according to IRS Commissioner John Koskinen. If your CEO appears to be emailing you for a list of company employees, check it out before you respond. Everyone has a responsibility to remain diligent about confirming the identity of people requesting personal information about employees.

IRS Criminal Investigation already is reviewing several cases in which people have been tricked into sharing SSNs with cybercriminals, who use stolen personal information to monetize data, including by filing fraudulent tax returns for refunds.

This phishing variation is known as a spoofing email. It will contain, for example, the actual name of the company chief executive officer. In this variation, the CEO sends an email to a company payroll office employee and requests a list of employees and information including SSNs.

The following are some of the details contained in the phishing emails:

- Kindly send me the individual 2015 W-2 (PDF) and earnings summary of all W-2 of our company staff for a quick review.
- Can you send me the updated list of employees with full details (Name, Social Security Number, Date of Birth, Home Address, Salary).
- I want you to send me the list of W-2 copy of employees wage and tax statement for 2015, I need them in PDF file type, you can send it as an attachment. Kindly prepare the lists and email them to me asap.

The IRS also recently renewed a wider consumer alert for email schemes after seeing an approximate 400 percent surge in phishing and malware incidents so far this tax season and other reports of scams targeting others in a wider tax community. The emails are designed to trick taxpayers into thinking these are official communications from the IRS or others in the tax industry, including tax software companies. The phishing schemes can ask taxpayers about a wide range of topics. Emails can seek information related to refunds, filing status, confirming personal information, ordering transcripts and verifying PIN information.

To read the original article, go to: <https://www.irs.gov/uac/Newsroom/IRS-Alerts-Payroll-and-HR-Professionals-to-Phishing-Scheme-Involving-W2s>