NortonLifeLock Experts Warn Against COVID-Related Tax Phishing Scams

2021-03-24

With up to 60 new tax-related phishing sites appearing each day, NortonLifeLock shares Cyber Safety tips consumers can take to protect their personal and financial information

TEMPE, Ariz.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- On the heels of the IRS tax filing extension in the U.S., NortonLifeLock (NASDAQ: NLOK), a global leader in consumer Cyber Safety, today alerted consumers to surging tax-related phishing scams and shared Cyber Safety tips to help people stay ahead of cybercriminals and more safely take advantage of the extended time to file this season. While tax-related identity theft is an ongoing threat year-round, NortonLifeLock experts expect to see an increase this year due to the significant rise in unemployment benefits fraud and COVID related tax refund phishing scams.

“We’re seeing up to 60 new tax-related phishing sites appear each day,” said Darren Shou, head of technology for NortonLifeLock. “Many of these sites may only be active for 24 hours, but in that short span of time, attackers can use the information consumers believed they were sharing with a legitimate site for tax fraud, unemployment fraud, fake job hiring scams and other financial crimes. This year, cybercriminals are also taking advantage of the pandemic with COVID-related phishing scams, impersonating the IRS with emails to consumers with the false promise of tax relief payments that attempt to swindle people into providing their real personal and financial information.”

With more than 57 million people in the U.S. filing for unemployment between March and September 2020, identity thieves have taken advantage of the overwhelming number of claims by using personal information, such as a social security number or financial account information, to file an income tax return and steal the tax refund. According to the Department of Labor Inspector General, as much as $60 billion in pandemic-related unemployment benefits are fake.

NortonLifeLock recommends individuals take the following steps to protect themselves:

- **Avoid Suspicious Links and Emails:** Criminals often engage in phishing scams to get personal information like social security numbers, mailing addresses or birthdates. Companies will never ask for sensitive information through email, and the IRS initiates most contact with taxpayers through U.S. mail. Consumers should take extra steps to verify these forms of communication by avoiding links or downloading attachments and confirming that the website for a link is legitimate.
- **Apply for an IP PIN:** An Identity Protection Personal Identification Number, better known as an IP PIN, is a six-digit number assigned by the IRS that individuals can use to combat tax-related identity theft. The IP PIN can be used when filing an income-tax return to help prevent cyberthieves from filing false returns.
- **Report Identity Theft Immediately:** If an individual receives a 1099-G form for unemployment benefits they did not receive, they should contact the issuing state agency to request a revised 1099-G showing they did not receive these benefits. Next, they should immediately complete IRS Form 14039 to report fraudulent returns to the IRS and attach the document to their physical tax return. Individuals can also

report this crime to law enforcement and the Federal Trade Commission as well as the three national credit bureaus of Experian, Equifax and TransUnion to place a fraud alert or credit freeze on their credit reports. Consumers should also inform their employer's human resources department.
- **Protect Personal Information:** Finally, to keep information safe, it's critical to create strong passwords, keep tax records secure, use a secure Wi-Fi connection, and never share sensitive information over the phone. NortonLifeLock also recommends individuals monitor their online bank and credit accounts for suspicious charges or withdrawals.

To learn more about identity theft, visit https://us.norton.com/internetsecurity-id-theft.html.

About NortonLifeLock Inc.

NortonLifeLock Inc. (NASDAQ: NLOK) is a global leader in consumer Cyber Safety, protecting and empowering people to live their digital lives safely. We are the consumer's trusted ally in an increasingly complex and connected world. Learn more about how we're transforming Cyber Safety at www.NortonLifeLock.com.

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