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In these difficult economic times, individuals can find it difficult to keep up financially. It can also be challenging to pay unexpected tax debt owed to the IRS. Criminals are aware of this and may attempt to contact you in an effort to take advantage of your financial hardship. It is important to know that the IRS does not initiate taxpayer communications through e-mail.

In recent months, I have been contacted about phishing emails that appear to be official IRS communication circulating around the internet. Phishing is the act of sending an email to a user falsely claiming to be the legitimate enterprise in an attempt to scam the user into surrendering private information that could be used for identity theft. These emails may ask you to update, validate, or confirm your account information. These unsolicited e-mails can refer to the IRS or other IRS-related components such as the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFTPS). By threatening dire consequences, the email directs you to a bogus website for you to divulge your personal information.

There are several things you can do to protect yourself from these types of threats. If you receive what appears to be a phishing e-mail, do not reply or click on any links in the message. Also, do not cut and paste the link from the message into your Internet browser. You can report the suspicious e-mail to the IRS by forwarding the original message to phishing@irs.gov or by calling 1-800-366-4484. It is also important to keep all anti-virus and firewall software up-to-date. This will protect your computer from any unwanted files connected with the phishing communication.

I hope this information is helpful. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to call our office.

Sincerely,

Clifton Brigham, CPA, MST, CFP®, CGMA
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