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were trying to trick them into disclosing their email usernames and passwords.

May. 25, 2018

The IRS and its state and industry Security Summit partners today warned tax practitioners to beware of phishing emails posing as state accounting and professional associations.

The IRS has received reports from tax professionals who received fake emails that were trying to trick them into disclosing their email usernames and passwords.

Cybercriminals specifically targeted tax professionals in Iowa, Illinois, New Jersey and North Carolina. The IRS also received reports about a Canadian accounting association.

The awkwardly worded phishing email states: "We kindly request that you follow this link **HERE** and sign in with your email to view this information from (name of accounting association) to all active members. This announcement has been updated for your kind information through our secure information sharing portal which is linked to your email server."

Tax practitioners nationwide should be on guard because cybercriminals can easily change their tactics, using other association names or making other adjustments in their scam attempts.

Tax practitioners who are members of professional associations should go directly to those associations' websites rather than open any links or attachments. Tax practitioners who receive suspicious emails related to taxes or the IRS, or phishing attempts to gain access to practitioner databases, should forward those emails to phishing@irs.gov.

This scam serves as a reminder to all tax professionals that cybercriminals are

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- Create a data security plan using IRS [Publication 4557](#), Safeguarding Taxpayer Data, and [Small Business Information Security – The Fundamentals](#), by the National Institute of Standards and Technology.
- Review internal controls:
 - Install anti-malware/anti-virus security software on all devices (laptops, desktops, routers, tablets and phones) and keep software set to automatically update.
 - Create passwords of at least eight characters; longer is better. Use different passwords for each account, use special and alphanumeric characters and phrases. Password protect wireless devices and consider a password manager program.
 - Encrypt all sensitive files/emails and use strong password protections.
 - Back up sensitive data to a safe and secure external source not connected fulltime to a network.
 - Wipe clean or destroy old computer hard drives and printers that contain sensitive data.
 - Limit access to taxpayer data to individuals who need to know.
 - Check IRS e-Services account weekly for number of returns filed with EFIN.
- Report any data theft or data loss to the appropriate [IRS Stakeholder Liaison](#).
- Stay connected to the IRS through subscriptions to [e-News for Tax Professionals](#), [Quick Alerts](#) and [Social Media](#).

Technology

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