

Important message for tax agents

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Phishing Scam

Over the past two weeks Inland Revenue has received reports of a telephone phishing scam from several hundred customers around New Zealand.

The scam calls have been made to landlines and mobile phones, with messages being left on voicemail if the calls haven't been answered.

The callers state that they are from the Inland Revenue Department and the following scenarios have been reported, that the customer:

- is wanted for historic tax evasion or tax avoidance
- has a red flag on their file
- is in debt

and they or their lawyer must return the call as soon as possible. Some customers have been told to make a payment via Western Union within 30 minutes, or risk arrest.

They are often told to ring a Wellington number – (04) 830 2441 – and recommended to speak to a “Kenneth Matthews”, “James Matthews” or “Kevin Sousa” to arrange an immediate payment so as to avoid serious repercussions.

Customers have reported the callers as having “foreign sounding” accents, with many different accents reported. Sometimes the caller is female. The callers are very confident and convincing, and we have received anecdotal reports that some customers have been taken in and paid significant sums of money to the scammers.

Some customers have called the number referred to above and reported the background as sounding like a Contact Centre environment with multiple accents. These customers have also reported the callers as becoming angry and aggressive when challenged.

We would like to remind all Tax Agents that Inland Revenue staff would not leave messages like these for your clients.

If your clients receive a suspicious email, SMS scam message or a fraudulent call, please email phishing@ird.govt.nz and include:

- the email received, or
- the number that the text message or phone number (CallerID) originated from (if not blocked)
- any names and call-back numbers given by the text sender or phone caller
- details about the scam including:
 - the amount of tax refund quoted
 - the reference number
 - the information requested, and
 - any other relevant information.

Inland Revenue sent out a media release last week warning customers about the scam and this has been reported in several local publications.

Michael Maclean
Interactional, Customer Services