



DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

DOUGLAS S. CHIN
ATTORNEY GENERAL

For Immediate Release
February 2, 2016

News Release 2016-4

HAWAII ATTORNEY GENERAL AND OFFICE OF CONSUMER PROTECTION WARN RESIDENTS ABOUT RECENT 'GOVERNMENT IMPOSTER' SCAMS

HONOLULU – Attorney General Doug Chin and Executive Director of the Office of Consumer Protection Stephen Levins are warning the public about two recent attempts by scammers to obtain personal data from Hawaii residents by posing as representatives of state government.

In one scam the Hawaii Public Housing Authority (“HPHA”) received multiple complaints from people trying to apply online for Section 8 housing vouchers. In so doing applicants found themselves on a website that asked for credit card and social security number information. The ‘government imposter’ site mentions the HPHA and seems to perform a credit check. The suspected website is not the HPHA’s and is in no way affiliated with the HPHA.

Executive Director of the HPHA Hakim Ouansafi said: "The HPHA alerted the Attorney General, Honolulu Police Department and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) so that the State's most vulnerable population does not fall victim to this type of scam. The HPHA never requires fees or credit checks to apply for any of its programs. Potential applicants for Section 8 or public housing should be vigilant when asked to provide private information and should contact the HPHA directly at (808) 832-6040 if they have any concerns about websites, advertisements, postings, etc."

In another scam people reported receiving emails that claim to include a “membership certificate” and “official letter” from the Director of the Department of Budget and Finance. This email asks the recipient to raise funds in order to allow them to “gain rights to certain benefit.” The email includes two attachments with official-looking seals and claims to be sent by a representative of the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) in Washington, D.C. Copies of the government imposter scam letter and scam certificate are attached to this release.

Attorney General Chin said “If you receive a suspicious message that claims to be from a government agency, do not click on any links in the email or respond to the email or call with any personal or financial information. When in doubt, please report the suspicious activity to law enforcement.”

According to Executive Director Levins “The best way to guard against this kind of illegal conduct is to be very careful when you give out your personal information. Never provide it to someone who telephones or emails you out of the blue. And always remember, just because someone claims that they are from your bank or from a government agency doesn’t mean that they are.”

There are several ways to spot possible ‘government imposter’ scams. Among other things these scam emails typically involve messages that:

- Are poorly written;
- Are sent from ‘.com’ email addresses rather than ‘.gov’ email addresses;
- Say you have won a lottery or sweepstakes;
- Say you owe a fake debt; or
- Ask you to wire money right away, often to a foreign country.

For more information about how to recognize a government imposter and report such scams, please visit this consumer protection information website of the Federal Trade Commission: <http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0048-government-imposter-scams>.

attachments

###

For more information, contact:

Joshua A. Wisch
Special Assistant to the Attorney General
(808) 586-1284
Joshua.A.Wisch@hawaii.gov
<http://ag.hawaii.gov>

or

Shelly Kunishige
Multimedia Education Specialist
Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs
Phone: (808) 587-6735
Email: skunishi@dcca.hawaii.gov