

Fraud Advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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<http://oig.ssa.gov>

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Social Security Inspector General Warns Public about Email Phishing Scam

The Inspector General of Social Security, Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr., is warning citizens about a fraudulent email "phishing" scheme targeting anyone who may receive Social Security benefits, now or in the future. The Social Security Administration (SSA) has received reports of e-mail messages that falsely claim to be from SSA in an attempt to obtain your personal information.

The e-mail has the subject line, "Verify Your Personal information with Social Security Administration," and it fraudulently uses a replica of the SSA seal. It asks you to verify your Social Security number to make sure it "matches" what SSA has on file, by clicking a link to submit the "Social Security Administration Verification form." It also states that the verification is required due to a "server upgrading, preparation for the Coming 2016 Tax year" [sic] and implies that verifying your Social Security number may lead to higher Social Security benefits.

There are several variations of this type of email phishing scam, which could lead to identity theft or Social Security benefit theft. Therefore, Inspector General O'Carroll urges you to take precautions when giving out sensitive personal information over the Internet or the telephone. Mr. O'Carroll states, "You should never provide your Social Security number, bank account numbers, or other personal information over the Internet or by telephone unless you are extremely confident of the source to which you are providing the information."

If you have questions about any communication—email, letter, text, or phone call—that claims to be from SSA, O'Carroll recommends you contact your local Social Security office, or call Social Security's toll-free customer service number at **1-800-772-1213**, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday, to verify its legitimacy. (Those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can call Social Security's TTY number at 1-800-325-0778.)

You may report suspicious activity involving Social Security programs and operations to the Social Security Fraud Hotline at <http://oig.ssa.gov/report>, or by phone at 1-800-269-0271, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday. (Those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can call the OIG TTY number at 1-866-501-2101.)

For more information, please contact Tracy Lynge, OIG's Communications Director, at (410) 965-2671.