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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE




APRIL 2, 2020

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**IRS-CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION AND U.S. ATTORNEY'S
OFFICE WARN TAXPAYERS OF COVID-19
ECONOMIC IMPACT PAYMENT SCAMS**

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation Special Agent-in-Charge Jonathan D. Larsen and U.S. Attorney James P. Kennedy, Jr. today are urging New York taxpayers to be vigilant of emerging scams targeting COVID-19 economic impact payments.

“We are living in unprecedented times and each one of us is struggling one way or another,” said Jonathan Larsen, Special Agent in charge of the IRS-CI New York Field Office. “In the coming weeks, the IRS will be issuing economic impact payments meant for hardworking Americans in a time of need and uncertainty. However, ruthless criminals are already preying on people’s fear during this pandemic, orchestrating various schemes to steal your money. Anyone expecting to receive a COVID-19 economic impact payment is at risk and we urge you to protect yourself.”

“Sadly, even during the most difficult of times for our community and Nation, the criminal element is standing by waiting to take advantage of a vulnerable and unsuspecting public,” stated U.S. Attorney Kennedy. “To my fellow Americans I say, please be as vigilant to protect these payments as you have been in your efforts to help slow the spread of the virus. The IRS is telling you how the process will work and that certain things—such as requests for personal information, contact through social media, or requests for further verification—are not part of that process. To the scammers I say, beware, we will stop at nothing to find you, and once we do, we will administer to you a healthy dose of justice.”

Scammers may try to get you to sign over your economic impact check to them. Alternatively, they may inform you that, in order for the IRS to issue your payment, they must first “verify” your filing information. They will then use this personal information to file a false tax return in your name and claim a fraudulent refund. The tactics may continue to evolve but the goal is the same: to steal your money and personal information to commit other crimes.

Taxpayers should know that the IRS will deposit COVID-19 economic impact payments into the direct deposit account they previously provided on their tax return. Unsolicited phone calls, emails, text messages or other communications pretending to be from the IRS are likely a scam.

The IRS will not:

- Call and ask you to verify your payment details. Do not give out your bank account, debit card or PayPal account information. If you receive an unsolicited call, simply hang up.
- Text, email or contact you via social media to say that you can get your money faster by sending personal information. Don’t open attachments or click on links.
- Mail or deposit a check that requires you to verify the check online or by calling a number. Reports are emerging about bogus checks. If you receive a “check” in the mail now, it’s a fraud. It will take about three weeks for the distribution of checks to begin. If you receive a “check” for an odd amount (especially one with cents), or a check that requires that you verify the check online or by calling a number, it’s a scam.

Although criminals may change their tactics, knowing how the IRS will be issuing the COVID-19 economic impact payments can help taxpayers protect themselves. For the latest information visit www.irs.gov/coronavirus.

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