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Telephone Scammers Target State Businesses

Olympia, Wash., March 20, 2009 — Scammers posing as Washington Department of Revenue employees are calling Washington businesses directing them to a bogus international phone number and charging them for the call, the Department warned today.

The automated phone calls state that the Department of Revenue has been trying to reach the business about its tax account and to call 1-800-431-4028. When the taxpayer calls that number, another recording prompts them to call 1015158000 and pay a charge of \$5.49 plus undisclosed administrative fees. A 101 number indicates an international call.

“This is just a scam to mislead callers into paying a phone charge,” Revenue Director Cindi Holmstrom said. “Don’t fall for it.”

She noted that the Department does make phone calls to businesses that fall behind on filing their state excise tax returns and leaves a nearly identical callback number of 1-800-631-4028. Businesses calling the Department’s number will never be redirected to a second number that charges a fee. The Department also operates a toll-free telephone assistance number, 1-800-647-7706.

The Department has contacted the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Consumer Affairs Division of the Washington State Attorney General’s office, Holmstrom said. However, it is difficult to pursue telephone scammers because they usually are based in foreign countries.

“We’re not aware of anyone who actually has called the 101 number and been charged for it,” Holmstrom added. “Most people do the smart thing and hang up, and you should too.”

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