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Contact Kylie Mason

Phone 850-245-0150

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

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CONSUMER ALERT: Beware of Conversation Hijacking Scams



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—With tax season arriving, Attorney General Ashley Moody is warning consumers about an evolved form of phishing attack. Conversation hijacking attacks involve scammers accessing an ongoing email conversation and sending a new message containing a malicious link or attachment—giving the appearance that the message is from a trusted source. Victims clicking on the link or opening the attachment are then prompted to provide personal information that could be used to submit fraudulent tax returns.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “As technology evolves, so do the methods scammers use to bypass security and trick users into compromising sensitive information. Conversation hijacking attacks are the latest trick being used to steal people’s identities and access their financial information. Floridians should remain cautious and avoid clicking on links or opening attachments that seem suspicious.”

To guard against conversation hijacking scams, people should:

· Never share passwords or login credentials with anyone;
· Change passwords frequently;
· Maintain a strong password that utilizes numbers and special characters—avoiding common words, birth dates, or other easily discernable terms;
· Not click on unsolicited links or download any unsolicited files without verbally verifying the authenticity with the sender through another means of communication, such as a phone call; and
· Ensure systems and devices are updated with the latest operating systems, security patches and antivirus software.

Below are some common clues that an email or text message is a phishing scam:

· Unfamiliar sender;
· Poor spelling and grammar;
· Use of terms that are not normally associated with the topic of the message;
· Message is unexpected, out of place, or urgent;
· Sender attempts to elicit some sort of emotion, such as sympathy or fear; or
· An unsolicited statement that the sender is unavailable to talk on the phone.

Anyone encountering a conversation hijacking scam or any other deceptive and unfair practice should report the incident to the Florida Attorney General's Office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or visiting MyFloridaLegal.com.

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The Florida Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division issues Consumer Alerts to inform Floridians of emerging scams, new methods used to commit fraud, increased reports of common scams or any other deceptive practice. Consumer Alerts are designed to educate Floridians about scams in an effort to prevent financial losses or other harm caused by deceptive practices. Anyone encountering a scam should report the incident to the Florida Attorney General's Office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or visiting MyFloridaLegal.com.