



STATE OF ALABAMA STATE BANKING DEPARTMENT



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Governor, Banking Department Alert Public to Email Theft

State to Air Announcements Warning Alabamians to be Wary of Internet Scams

“Your account is in danger of being closed – send us your Social Security Number and your secret password,” an email tells you. Believe it or not Alabamians fall for that line everyday. They are hooked like fish on the bait of a message that is a lie.

“Phishing” is what they call it. Scare someone into foolishly sending their personal information out to a thief who is acting like a bank or bankcard company. “Once you’re hooked,” warned state Banking Superintendent John Harrison, “the crooks steal your identity and trash your credit and steal from any account that they can break into.”

The State of Alabama Banking Department and Gov. Bob Riley have unleashed a new TV and radio public awareness campaign designed to help defend unsuspecting potential “phishing” victims from having their personal identities stolen.

“Phishing” is a new way for online con artists to rob you by sending an email looking like it came from a legitimate bank. The “phishing” victim is conned into thinking it’s a real email message from his or her bank notifying about suspicious activity occurring with their account. A message warning indicates failure to respond by clicking-on a provided “link” and updating and/or re-entering personal information will result in the bank account being terminated.

“It has reached near epidemic proportions”, said Riley. “Many Alabamians have fallen prey to these scams and have actually clicked-on those links and provided online thieves with Social Security Numbers, bank account numbers, and other vital private information”. Once done, thieves remove the money from those accounts or they can immediately buy cars, computers, take cruises and generally destroy the unsuspecting “phishing” victims’ financial well being.

“Don’t Get Hooked by a Crook!” Public Service Announcements are running on television stations and radio around Alabama to inform viewers about “phishing” emails, and to show what fake bank emails look like. The State of Alabama Banking Department and Governor Bob Riley warn the general public about these schemes in two thirty second TV Public Service Announcements.

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Each announcement shows the typical wording often used by crooks to help convince a person to take action by providing the requested personal information. The overall theme of the awareness campaign is the message that **“LEGITIMATE BANKS WOULD NEVER ASK FOR INFORMATION THAT IT ALREADY HAS! So, Don’t Get Hooked by a Crook!”**

The Office of Information Technology Media Production Group at Auburn University provided the creative concepts and video production to capture the attention of television viewers.

For more information about Identity theft and what to do if you are a victim or protect yourself please feel free to visit the State of Alabama Banking Department web site:
www.banking.alabama.gov .

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For further media inquiries please call Elizabeth Bressler, General Counsel of the Alabama State Banking Department at (334)242-3452 or via email to elizabeth.bressler@banking.alabama.gov .