



OFFICE OF THE
UTAH STATE AUDITOR

Auditor Alert – 2016-05

Date: June 29, 2016

Subject: **ALERT OF RECENT PHISHING SCAMS ATTACKING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

Recently two counties have been victims of “spear phishing” email scams. In both instances, the county treasurer received an email that appeared to come from a county commissioner. However, the email was actually from a criminal hacker. The email requested an urgent wire transfer to an out-of-state bank.

This targeted email scam thrives on familiarity, using information publicly available on an entity’s website – such as names, titles, or other references. This familiarity often makes the recipient of the email less vigilant in verifying the requests. The scam also thrives on urgency, indicating that the payment must be made immediately.

In both cases the treasurer replied to the email, but it was routed to the scammer who responded with false verification. If you receive requests for money route the request through the appropriate approval process. In these cases, a quick phone call would have saved a lot of hassle.

Regardless of the urgency, **DO NOT circumvent existing internal controls**, continue to follow established procedures.