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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY AUDITOR

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AUDITOR WARNS – DON'T GET HOOKED BY "PHISHING" SCAM

DuPage County Auditor Jim Rasins is alerting residents to beware of e-mail scams from sources that appear to be established, legitimate enterprises. Rasins, a Certified Fraud Examiner, recently received an e-mail from a large, internationally known bank with several offices located within DuPage County. The subject line of the e-mail referred to the contents as an "Urgent Security Notice for Client of the Bank."

Rasins, who is not a customer of the bank, suspected that something was amiss. The e-mail requested information regarding the bank account of the supposed customer, including account number, account name, account passwords, etc., -- in other words, enough information to allow access to the bank account.

"The e-mail included a logo and typeface that were very similar to what the bank uses in its official correspondence," Rasins said.

"It even stated that the information was requested to safeguard the bank customer from identity theft, and that the customer's account would be suspended if the information was not provided," the Auditor continued.

Neither of these statements was true. In fact, the sole purpose of the e-mail was to gather information to defraud the individual who received the notice.

This type of e-mail is referred to as “phishing” or “spoofing”. The e-mail is sent to thousands of e-mail addresses with the hope that recipients will divulge personal data. By using a trusted, recognizable logo or brand name, the senders try to make the request seem legitimate.

“While the internet is a great communication tool, it also provides new perils for people to become victims of fraud,” Rasins cautioned.

In order to avoid becoming a victim of these scams, Rasins recommends the following:

- Be suspicious of any unsolicited e-mail containing an urgent request for personal financial information.
- If you suspect the e-mail is not authentic, do not use the links contained in the e-mail to get to another web page.
- When submitting sensitive personal data to an internet site, ensure that you are using a secure website, noted by “https://” at the start of the web address.
- Ensure that your internet browser software is up-to-date and that security patches are installed.

If you feel that you have been victimized by an internet scam or fraud, several federal agencies and local law enforcement offices provide the means to report such activity. Rasins noted that the Federal Bureau of Investigation operates the Internet Fraud Complaint Center, at <http://www.ifccfbi.gov>.

“People need to exercise common sense and skepticism before providing data over the internet,” Rasins said.

