The Wisconsin Credit Union League

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NEWS RELEASE

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Credit unions reporting incidents of automated phone calling scams

Pewaukee, WI – Several credit unions across the state say scam artists are now using automated phone calls with recordings asking consumers to divulge personal financial account information – a process called "phishing."

Phishing is a type of scam used with the intent of capturing personal information through mass messages like phone calls, emails, text messages or advertisements. That means consumers need to be wary when receiving unsolicited contacts that ask them to update, validate or confirm account information.

The automated phone messages reported Tuesday claimed the member's credit and/or debit card had been locked and asked the member to input the card number to unlock it. But no legitimate business – including Wisconsin credit unions or other financial institutions – would ever seek account information this way.

The Credit Union National Association, whose website at www.cuna.org also notes variations on scam tactics, says recent unsolicited requests for personal information have circulated under the subjects, "Account De-activation," "Account Status Alert, " Changes to Terms and Conditions," and "Irregular Activity."

The Federal Trade Commission recommends these tips for consumers:

- **Verify inquiries by phone.** If you receive a phone call to verify information, hang up and call your financial institution at the number listed on your financial statement or in the phone book.
- **Don't respond to unsolicited emails or phone calls.** Scam artists use emails to direct people to impostor websites – like your credit union's site – that trick consumers into divulging personal information.
- **Update protection software.** Use anti-virus and anti-spyware software, as well as a firewall.
- **Avoid emails for sensitive information.** Email is simply not a secure method of transmission.
- **Be alert.** Review your financial account statements immediately to check for unauthorized charges.
- **Don't download files.** Be wary about opening attachments or downloading files from emails, regardless of who sent them. They may contain viruses or software that can weaken your computer's security.

Consumers can help fight phishing attempts by forwarding suspicious emails to the Federal Trade Commission at spam@uce.gov. If you've been scammed, visit the Federal Trade Commission's Identity Theft website at ftc.gov/idtheft for important information on the next steps to take. For more tips from the federal government and the technology industry to help you be on guard against Internet fraud, secure your computer and protect your personal information, visit www.OnGuardOnline.gov.

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Credit unions are cooperative financial institutions that are owned by their members and do not have stockholders. Because they are not-for-profit, they return earnings to members in the form of more competitive rates of return on accounts, lower interest on loans, lower fees and improved services. Around 2.2 million Wisconsin residents belong to credit unions, of which nearly half are open to the local community. People can find a credit union to join by looking in the phone book or by visiting www.theleague.coop/findacu.