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E-MAIL WARNING OF MURDER CONTRACT IS CIRCULATING

BISMARCK – An alarming e-mail has begun circulating in North Dakota, but Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem cautions residents not to be too worried. The e-mail appears to be another version of a well-known e-mail scam.

The e-mail, usually containing a safety message in the subject line, warns the recipient that there is a contract on the recipient's life. He claims to have been hired by someone the recipient knows and has already been fully paid to perform the hit. The sender warns the reader not to contact law enforcement. If the recipient wants to stop the hit, he is asked to respond to the e-mail to make arrangements to pay the hit man more than the original contract amount. And for "good faith," the hit man says he will take payments.

Two lawmakers received the e-mail and notified Stenehjem's office.

"BCI has investigated these e-mails and found no credible threat. This e-mail has previously surfaced in several other Midwestern states. It appears to be another variation of the Nigerian scam, and the best thing to do with it is delete it without response" said Stenehjem. The e-mail address is "spoofed" and, according to federal authorities, leads out of the United States.

In the typical "Nigerian" scam, con artists entice their victims into believing they have been singled out from the masses to share in multi-million dollar windfall profits. While this latest twist on the scam involves a death threat and extortion, the purpose is the same – to con the unsuspecting and scared victim into sending money to the scam artist.

"Consumers receiving one of these e-mails should never provide bank account, credit card account, or other financial or personal confidential information. State and federal authorities are confident this instance is a scam, but if any consumer receives an e-mail they believe to be a real threat, they should contact local law enforcement," said Stenehjem.

Additional information regarding the "Nigerian letter" scam and other common scams is available from the Consumer Protection link of the Attorney General's website, at www.ag.nd.gov.