

Tax Season & IRS Identity Fraud



Tax refund fraud has exploded in recent years. Scammers typically use stolen names and Social Security numbers to file phony electronic tax forms for IRS refunds. Currently, there are over 650,000 unsolved identity theft cases stuck at the IRS. It can take from six months to the better part of a year to clear a case for an individual taxpayer.

Here are some signs to watch for if you suspect you may be a victim. Be alert to possible identity theft if you receive an IRS notice or letters that states:



More than one tax return for you was filed with the IRS



You have a balance due, refund offset or have had collection actions taken against you for a year you did not file a tax return



IRS records indicate you received wages from an employer unknown to you

Here are four things the scammers often do but the IRS will not do. Any one of these actions are a tell-tale sign of a scam.

THE IRS WILL NEVER:



The IRS will never call to demand immediate payment, nor call about taxes owed without first having mailed you a bill



The IRS will never ask for credit card, debit card or bank account numbers over the phone; they will also never require you to use a specific payment method, such as a prepaid debit card



An unexpected email claiming to be from the IRS is always a scam; the IRS does not initiate contact with taxpayers by email or social media



Threaten to bring in local police or other law enforcement groups to have you arrested for non-payment of your taxes

Minimize Your Chances of Becoming a Victim

- File your taxes as early as possible so that any problems become apparent quickly
- Don't give personal information over the phone, through the mail or online unless you have initiated the contact, or you are completely sure you know who you are dealing with
- Don't carry your Social Security card or any documents with your SSN printed on it
- Don't give a business your Social Security number just because they ask for it; give it only when required by law
- Protect and shred your personal/financial information
- Check your credit report often
- Secure personal info at home
- Use firewalls and anti-spam/virus software and update security patches on personal computer devices
- When offered, use a 2-factor authorization/verification
- If you are a FL, GA or DC resident, apply to the IRS for your unique PIN number with which to file your taxes