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information through organizations, customers and partners.

Nov. 17, 2017



For the second year, the Internal Revenue Service, state tax agencies and the tax industry will host National Tax Security Awareness Week to encourage both individual and business taxpayers to take additional steps to protect their tax data and identities in advance of the 2018 filing season.

Starting Monday, Nov. 27, National Tax Security Awareness Week will focus daily on

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Summit partners and other consumer, business and community groups will be hosting a series of more than 20 events across the country to raise awareness during National Tax Security Awareness Week. This is especially timely as the holiday season brings out not only online shoppers but online thieves seeking to trick people into disclosing sensitive information that could be used to help file fraudulent tax returns.

The week also comes amid continuing disclosures that more than 145 million Americans have had their names, addresses and Social Security numbers stolen from a variety of places. No one yet knows how cybercriminals will use this data or try to make money from it.

The IRS and states have put many new defenses in place to help protect taxpayers from identity theft. The new IRS protections have worked well to protect taxpayers, and some key indicators of identity theft on tax returns have dropped by around two-thirds since 2015.

These protections are especially helpful if criminals only have names, addresses and SSNs – which was the information stolen in recent incidents. However, there are continuing concerns that cybercriminals will try to build on this basic information by trying to obtain more specific financial details from taxpayers and tax professionals to help them file fraudulent tax returns.

During the upcoming 2018 filing season, the IRS urges tax professionals, businesses and others to join with the Security Summit partners in sharing the security information through organizations, customers and partners.

During National Tax Security Awareness Week, people will learn about the basic steps necessary to protect themselves and their tax data online, such as using security software, strong passwords and data encryption. They will learn what steps they

should take if they are a data breach victim, such as placing a freeze on their credit

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financial information:

- Learn to recognize and avoid phishing emails, threatening phone calls and texts from thieves posing as legitimate organizations such as banks, credit card companies and government organizations, including the IRS. Do not click on links or download attachments from unknown or suspicious emails.
- Always use security software with firewall and anti-virus protections. Make sure the security software is always turned on and will automatically update. Encrypt sensitive files such as tax records stored on computers. Use strong passwords.
- Protect personal data. Use strong, unique passwords for each online account. Don't routinely carry Social Security cards, and make sure tax records are secure. Treat personal information like cash; don't leave it lying around.

The IRS, state tax agencies and the tax industry came together in 2015 to join forces in their fight against tax-related identity theft. Learn more about their efforts and their progress at [Security Summit](#) on IRS.gov.

Increasing public awareness about people's role in protecting their own data is a critical part of the Security Summit efforts. Partners launched the "[Taxes. Security. Together](#)" awareness campaign in the fall of 2015.

The partners followed up with "[Protect Your Clients; Protect Yourself](#)" campaign aimed at tax professionals. Partners also held a 10-week "[Don't Take the Bait](#)" awareness effort, warning tax professionals of the most common data breach scams targeting their offices and taxpayer data.

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