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Isaac M. O'Bannon • Aug. 08, 2014



Worried about tax scams? You're not alone.

A new study shows that 78 percent of Americans feel vulnerable to tax scams and 57 percent do not know how to prevent or protect themselves from falling victim to one.

The survey of 2,000 Americans, commissioned by TaxAudit.com and conducted by Toluna QuickSurveys, also showed that 88 percent of respondents believe tax

scams are a real problem in the U.S. and 20 percent say they know someone who has

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- If the caller claims that you need to send money right now or they will call the IRS or another government agency, know it is a scam and hang up.
- If you receive a call or email claiming to be holding your refund until they “verify” some information, such as your bank account number and PIN, it is a scam. Do not respond.
- If the person emailing claims, “I am from the IRS and I am here to help you obtain your refund,” they clearly are not either. The IRS does not contact taxpayers via email. Do not respond.
- If you receive a call from IRS asking for information, ask for the agent's ID number, then call the IRS directly to verify it or ask that they send their request in writing.
- Protect your personal identifiable information (PII) from theft. Store W-2s and other sensitive documents in secure locations.
- Check out the credentials of the tax preparer you are using. Ask if they are up to date on their continuing education, and ask to see their license or credential certificate. It's important to keep in mind that most tax return preparers in the U.S. are “unenrolled,” meaning they are preparers that are not attorneys, CPAs or Enrolled Agents and therefore have zero requirements for any education on tax laws, old or new. The IRS has admitted it cannot include a ban on these tax return preparers. In fact, preparers who have previously been sanctioned by the IRS by having their PTINs (preparer tax identification number) blocked can obtain or renew their PTINS and prepare tax returns now.
- If you do fall victim to a scam, seek guidance from the various resources available at [irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov)

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