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Taxpayer Identity Theft

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Concern Over Higher Risks

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account fraud among their clients.

Taxpayer and Certified Public Accounting Firm Strategies Against Fraud Activity

To mitigate the risk of fraud on tax returns or any other personal and financial client data, BKR members are urging their clients to follow IRS guidelines on fraud mitigation, reporting of suspicious activity and responding quickly to actual identity theft:

Protect Sensitive Data:

- Don't carry your Social Security card or any other document with your SSN on it.
- Don't routinely give a business or retailer your SSN just because they ask – be certain it's absolutely necessary.
- Protect personal financial information at home and on your computer.
- Request a credit report every four months for free by alternating among the three different credit agencies.
- Check Social Security Administration earnings statements annually.
- Protect personal computers with firewalls and anti-spam/virus software; update security patches and change passwords for Internet accounts.
- Don't give personal information over the phone, through the mail or the Internet unless you have either initiated the contact or are sure you know who is asking.

Notice Suspicious Activity:

The IRS will only send notices through the U.S. Postal Service, never through email or by phone, fax or social media. Report suspicious online or emailed phishing scams to: phishing@irs.gov. For phishing scams by phone, fax or mail, call: 1-800-366-4484. Report IRS impersonation scams to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration's [IRS Impersonation Scams Reporting](#).

Respond to Red Flags:

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- Report identity theft at [ftc.gov/complaint](https://www.ftc.gov/complaint) and learn how to respond to it at [identitytheft.gov](https://www.identitytheft.gov).
- Contact one of the three major credit bureaus to place a 'fraud alert' on your credit records:

Equifax, www.Equifax.com, 1-800-525-6285

Experian, www.Experian.com, 1-888-397-3742

TransUnion, www.TransUnion.com, 1-800-680-7289

- Contact your financial institutions and close any accounts opened without your permission or accounts that show signs of tampering.
- Check your Social Security Administration earnings statement annually. You can create an account online at www.ssa.gov.

If your SSN is compromised and you know or suspect you are a victim of tax-related identity theft, take these additional steps:

- Respond immediately to any IRS notice; call the number provided.
- Complete IRS Form 14039, Identity Theft Affidavit. Use a fillable form at [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov), print, then mail or fax according to instructions.
- Continue to pay your taxes and file your tax return, even if you must do so by paper.
- If you previously contacted the IRS and **did not have a resolution**, contact the Identity Protection Specialized Unit at 1-800-908-4490. They have teams available to assist.

Review Security Options With Your CPA:

BKR member firms cited the following strategies to support the protection of client

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Ltd., in Philadelphia.

“We as CPAs are in a unique position to help our clients understand how identity theft is committed and how they should best respond to the incident if it occurs. BKR members regularly share information on successful strategies and protocols to protect our clients at all times of the year, not just during filing season.” —Howard Rosen, CPA, JD, AEP, President and Principal of Conner Ash P.C. in St. Louis and BKR International Worldwide Chairman.

Go Even Further to Protect Personal Information:

According to the Identity Theft Council, identity theft happens somewhere in the U.S. every three seconds. They offer a free guide for mitigating security risks to personal and financial information.

<https://www.identitytheftcouncil.org/images/downloads/ThinkSecurityFirstHandbo>

They have also produced a documentary that looks into the minds of identity thieves and real victim examples to shed light on this expanding criminal industry.

<http://thieves.identitytheftcouncil.org/>

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