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information may have already filed a tax return in your name and collected a refund ...

Mar. 01, 2017



Identity theft is often the first step leading to an equally painful, if not a bigger, headache of falling victim to tax fraud. Scammers who stole your personal information may have already filed a tax return in your name and collected a refund without you even knowing it.

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Some of the sophisticated methods criminals rely on to trick people include spoofing caller ID readouts to make it appear a call is coming from the IRS. There are also “phishing” scams – where regular mail and emails asking for your updated information are distributed. They contain official IRS logos, contact information and are made to look real, but are not. Taxpayers as well as tax practitioners are often targets of phishing scams.

In addition to never contacting taxpayers by email, text messages or social media channels to request or confirm personal or financial information, the IRS also warns it does not:

- Use scare tactics: Making threats of arrest, confiscation of professional licenses and even deportation in order to get you to make an immediate payment
- Call you about your tax bill without first sending you a bill in the mail
- Demand you pay taxes owed and not allow you to question or appeal the amount
- Require that you pay your taxes a certain way (prepaid debit card or specific type of payment)
- Ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone
- Threaten to bring in police or other agencies to arrest you for not paying
- Threaten you with a lawsuit

Initial contact by the IRS usually happens in a letter through regular mail. If you believe you're the target of a phishing scam, you can forward it to phishing@irs.gov. Additional details are at the [IRS Tax Scams/Consumer Alert web page](#).

Monitoring your credit report for unusual activity, not using public Wi-Fi connections to send private information and shredding old financial documents are a few ID theft prevention steps that may help stop tax fraud. And during tax season,

having your tax forms delivered to you electronically and filing returns early can also

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Additional information is available at www.irs.gov.

Your local CPA can also provide strong assistance in helping you recover from tax fraud. Find a CPA near you by visiting icpas.org.

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