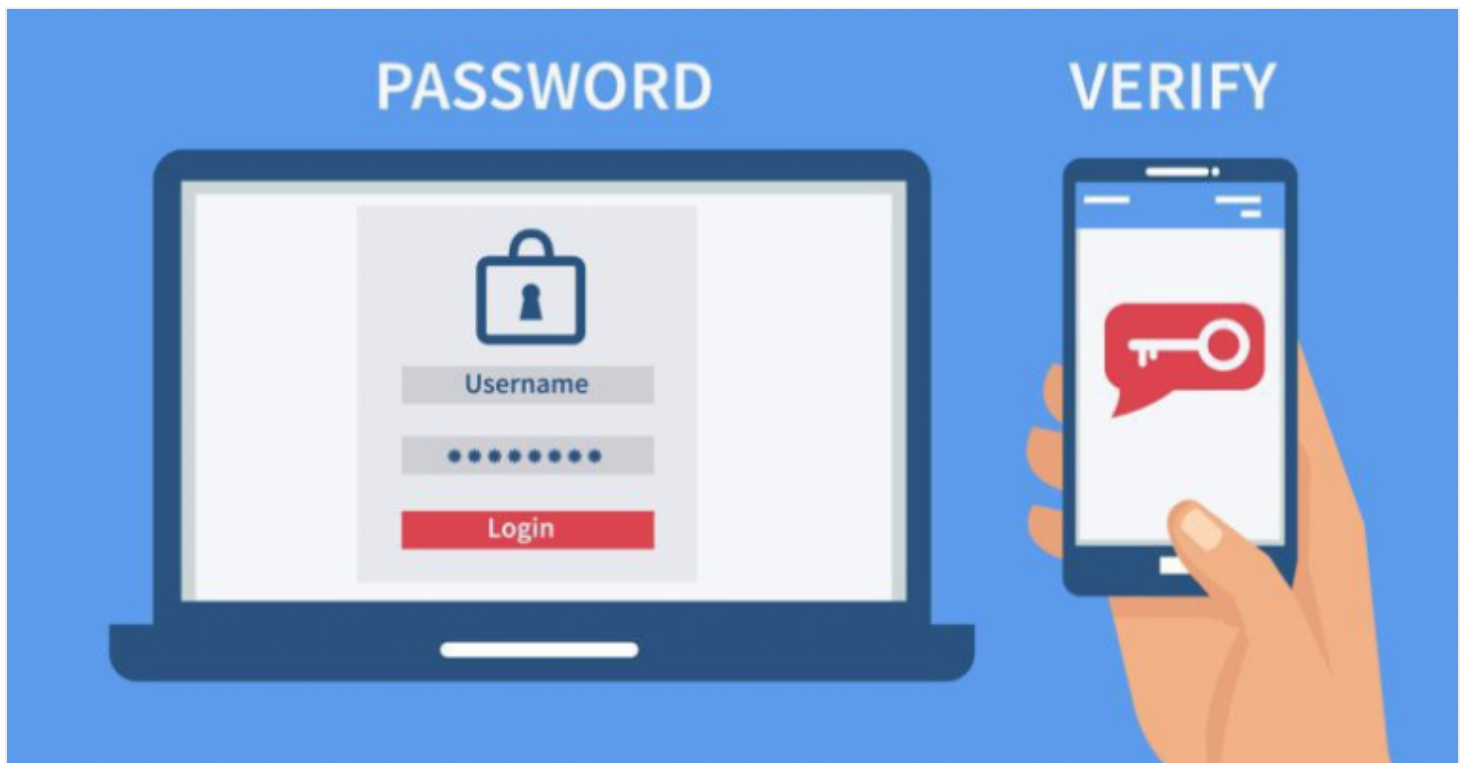


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protect clients and practitioners' offices from data thefts.

Feb. 25, 2020



Tax professionals and taxpayers are being reminded by the IRS and tax software makers to use the free, multi-factor authentication feature being offered on tax preparation software products.

Already, nearly two dozen tax practitioner firms have reported data thefts to the IRS this year. Use of the multi-factor authentication feature is a free and easy way to protect clients and practitioners' offices from data thefts. Tax software providers also offer free multi-factor authentication protections on their Do-It-Yourself products for taxpayers.

“The IRS, state tax agencies and the private-sector tax industry have worked together as the Security Summit to make sure the multi-factor authentication feature is

available to practitioners and taxpayers alike,” said Kenneth Corbin, Commissioner

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Multi-factor authentication protections are now commonly offered by financial institutions, email providers and social media platforms to protect online accounts. Users should always opt for multi-factor authentication when it is offered but especially with tax software products because of the sensitive data held in the software or online accounts.

The IRS reminded tax professionals to beware of phishing scams that are commonly used by thieves to gain control of their computers. Thieves may claim to be a potential client, a cloud storage provider, a tax software provider or even the IRS in their effort to trick tax professionals to download attachments or open links. These scams often have an urgent message, implying there are issues with the tax professionals' accounts that need immediate attention.

The IRS also reminds tax professionals that they can track the number of returns filed with their Electronic Filing Identification Number (EFIN) on a weekly basis. This helps ensure EFINS are not being misused. Simply go to e-Services, access the EFIN application and select EFIN status to see a weekly total of returns filed using the EFIN. If there are excessive returns, contact the IRS immediately.

Taxpayers can learn more about identity theft and how to protect themselves at [Identity Theft Central](#) on IRS.gov.

Tax professionals can learn more about protecting data, signs of theft or reporting data thefts [Identity Theft Information for Tax Professionals](#). Also, [Publication 4557](#), Safeguarding Taxpayer Data, provides a comprehensive overview of steps to protect computer systems and client data.

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