



It's that time of year again when the fraudulent IRS scams begin. The two prominent scams are telephone scams and email phishing. Beware of phone calls and emails from people claiming they are from the IRS.

Telephone scams - An aggressive and sophisticated phone scam targeting taxpayers, will soon be making the rounds throughout the country. Callers claim to be employees of the IRS, but are not. These con artists can sound convincing when they call. They use fake names and bogus IRS identification badge numbers. They may know a lot about their targets, and they usually alter the caller ID to make it look like the IRS is calling.

Victims are told they owe money to the IRS and it must be paid promptly through a pre-loaded debit card or wire transfer. If the victim refuses to cooperate, they are then threatened with arrest, deportation or suspension of a business or driver's license. In many cases, the caller becomes hostile and insulting.

Victims may also be told they have a refund due in order to try to trick them into sharing private information.

If the phone isn't answered, the scammers often leave an "urgent" callback request. Do not return these calls and hang up on these con artists if they get you on the phone.

Note that the IRS will never: 1) call to demand immediate payment, nor will the agency call about taxes owed without first having mailed you a bill; 2) demand that you pay taxes without giving you the opportunity to question or appeal the amount they say you owe; 3) require you to use a specific payment method for your taxes, such as a prepaid debit card; 4) ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone; or 5) threaten to bring in local police or other law-enforcement groups to have you arrested for not paying.

If you get a call from someone claiming to be with the IRS asking for a payment, here's what to do:

- If you owe Federal taxes, or think you might owe taxes, hang up and call the IRS at 800-829-1040. IRS workers can help you with your payment questions.
- If you do not owe taxes, fill out the "IRS Impersonation scam" form on TIGTA's website, www.tigta.gov, or call TIGTA at **800-366-4484**.

You can also file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at www.FTC.gov. Add "IRS Telephone Scam" to the comments in your complaint

Phishing emails solicit personal information. Phishing is a scam typically carried out through unsolicited email and/or websites that pose as legitimate sites and lure unsuspecting victims to provide personal and financial information.

Report all unsolicited email claiming to be from the IRS or an IRS-related function to phishing@irs.gov. Recent scams have used the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFTPS) to attract potential victims. Also, if you've experienced any monetary losses due to an IRS-related incident, please report it to the Treasury Inspector General Administration (TIGTA) and file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) through their Complaint Assistant to make the information available to investigators.

Beware of **fraudulent tax preparers**. Be sure you are using a reputable business or person to prepare your taxes. Several fly by night preparers pop up during tax time. Do your due diligence before choosing a person to prepare your taxes. Even friends of friends can be fraudulent preparers.

Check all prepared paperwork for accuracy and be sure your address is correct. If you are e-filing be sure YOUR bank routing number and bank account number is on the form when it is sent electronically.

Know the amount of your refund! Some preparers cash the check and steal part of the money then give the client a check for a lesser amount.

For more information on how to choose a tax preparer see this IRS website:

<https://www.irs.gov/uac/Newsroom/Return-Preparer-Fraud-Hits-IRS-Annual-Dirty-Dozen-List-of-Tax-Scams-to-Avoid-During-the-2015-Filing-Season>

For consumer alerts and information on tax scams, visit the IRS website:

<https://www.irs.gov/uac/Tax-Scams-Consumer-Alerts>