

Tax Scams and the IRS

Many people have fallen victim to tax scams—costing them money and allowing scammers access to their personal information. Scams regarding rebates, refunds, tax law changes and audits are designed to trick you into giving up your personal information, and unfortunately, these scams are particularly high at this time of the year. A good source of information on tax scams can be found at: <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/tax-scams-consumer-alerts>

In order to protect yourself from tax scams, you need to be aware what these unsolicited calls or emails may look like. The examples below will help you recognize when you are being scammed.

Refund – The email you receive says you are entitled to a “refund”. The email instructs you to click on a link to access the refund form. The form asks for your personal information which the scammer then uses to his or her benefit to use as they please.

SSN Scam - Taxpayers should be on the lookout for new variations of tax-related scams. In the latest twist on a scam related to Social Security numbers, scammers claim to be able to suspend or cancel the victim’s SSN. It’s yet another attempt by con artists to frighten people into returning ‘robocall’ voicemails.

Scammers may mention overdue taxes in addition to threatening to cancel the person’s SSN. If taxpayers receive a call threatening to suspend their SSN for an unpaid tax bill, they should just hang up. Make no mistake...it’s a scam.

Rebate Call – “You are entitled to a sizable rebate for filing your taxes early,” to process they require your bank account information for the direct deposit. If you refuse to supply this information they will tell you that you will not be able to receive the rebate.

Changes to the Tax Law – This email alerts you of changes in the tax law with a focus on deductions and tax savings. When you click on the link you download a malware; malware is malicious software that can take over a computer hard drive, giving someone access to the computer, or it could look for passwords and other information to send to the scammer.

Paper Check – “Your refund check has not been cashed,” says the caller. They need your bank account information to send you your refund. In reality, the IRS leaves it up to you if you cash your check or not. They will not call or email to make sure you do cash it.

Audit – This email will get everyone’s attention and scammers know it. The email directs you to click on the link to fill out the forms with personal and account information; which they use to steal your identity.

Third Party Debt Collection – You owe back taxes to the IRS and unless you wire the money or pay by credit card within the hour, local law enforcement will come and arrest you. The IRS will never collect taxes in this manner and local law enforcement does not get involved in these situations.

Taxpayers should not give out sensitive information over the phone unless they are positive they know the caller is legitimate. When in doubt –hang up.

The IRS and its authorized private collection agencies will never:

- Call to demand immediate payment using a specific payment method such as a prepaid debit card, iTunes gift card or wire transfer. The IRS does not use these methods for tax payments.
- Ask a taxpayer to make a payment to a person or organization other than the U.S. Treasury.
- Threaten to immediately bring in local police or other law-enforcement groups to have the taxpayer arrested for not paying.
- Demand taxes be paid without giving the taxpayer the opportunity to question or appeal the amount owed.

Taxpayers who **don't owe taxes** and have no reason to think they do should:

- Report the call to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration
- Report the caller ID and callback number to the IRS by sending it to phishing@irs.gov. The taxpayer should write "IRS Phone Scam" in the subject line.
- Report the call to the Federal Trade Commission. When reporting it, they should add "IRS Phone Scam" in the notes.

Taxpayers who **owe tax or think they do** should:

- View tax account information online at [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov) to see the actual amount owed and review their payment options.
- Call the number on the billing notice
- Call the IRS at [800-829-1040](tel:800-829-1040).