



**NEWS RELEASE**

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Contact: Sue Lindsay  
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303-835-5639

**CONSUMER ALERT: IRS TAX SCAMS**

It's tax time again and with it comes the season of IRS scams.

Not only do scammers contact taxpayers with phony claims of unpaid back taxes, they also try to steal your tax refund.

Identity theft remains one of the fastest growing crimes nationwide. All that a criminal needs to steal your tax refund is a name, birth date and Social Security number. Victims may discover the theft at the time they submit their tax return and the return is rejected because the thief has already filed using the victim's Social Security number. Victims who report the theft ultimately will receive their refund, but they have to prove who they are and it can take months to process and the thief may never be found.

The IRS advises taxpayers to file early, before a scammer, who may have your Social Security number from a recent data breach, tries filing under your name. The average turn-around time for a tax refund is 21 days from the date the return is received by the IRS.

The IRS gives these tips for protecting yourself from identity theft:

- Don't carry your Social Security card or any documents that include your SSN or Individual Taxpayer Identification number.
- Don't give a business your SSN just because they ask for it. Give it only when required.
- Protect your financial information.
- Check your credit report every 12 months.
- Secure personal information in your home.
- Protect your personal computers by using firewalls and anti-spam/virus software, updating security patches and changing passwords for Internet accounts.
- Don't give personal information over the phone, through the mail or on the Internet unless you have initiated the contact or you are sure you know who you are dealing with.

Be alert to signs of tax fraud:

- You submit your electronic tax return and it is rejected.
- You expect a tax refund but never receive it.
- You receive a notice from the IRS about issues with your return, a discrepancy in your earnings or an income change affecting federal or state benefits.
- You discover that one or more tax refunds have been filed under your SSN.
- You receive an email that appears to be from the IRS or other seemingly official agency requesting personal information such as your SSN, date of birth, etc., for verification reasons. This is likely an email phishing scam.

The IRS has established additional protections to control tax refund theft for the 2016 tax filing period. They are alert for returns filed in your name from a different address or listing a different employer. One measure is the issuance of individual IP-PIN numbers for victims of identity theft which will flag returns that require additional examination before a refund is sent. To obtain a PIN, victims need to fill out the Identity Theft Affidavit Form 14030 which can be found on the IRS website at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

If you discover you have been a victim of a stolen tax refund, contact the IRS Identity Theft Protection Specialized Unit at 1-800-908-4490.

These additional steps can be taken:

- File a report with local police.
- Contact the fraud departments of the three major credit bureaus.
- Close any accounts that have been accessed or opened fraudulently.

Here is a link to the IRS webpage on tax fraud:

<https://www.irs.gov/uac/Newsroom/Identity-Theft-Video-Series-Available-Special-Series-to-Help-Taxpayers-Avoid-Pitfalls-and-Stay-Safe-Online>

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