

# TAX SCAMS: PROTECT YOURSELF

By: Mirkin & Gordon, P.C.

Tax season is here again and with it, new and creative ways for scammers to take advantage of honest taxpayers. The following are some of the most popular scams this year and tips on how to avoid becoming a victim.

**IRS Impersonation Scams.** This often starts with a phone call from someone claiming to be an “IRS Agent” who says (1) you owe back taxes and pressures you into paying by prepaid debit card or wire transfer, threatening arrest and/or fines if you don’t or (2) they are issuing tax refunds and need your personal information to send it to you, but then use that information to steal your identity. Sometimes, scammers will target college students saying a “federal student tax” has not been paid.

Imposters go to great lengths to appear legitimate, giving fake badge numbers and names with spoofed caller IDs from Washington, D.C. Follow-up e-mails can often use IRS logos, colors, and official-sounding language. They will also pressure you to act quickly.

**Remember:** the IRS will always contact you by mail, **never** by phone or e-mail.

**Tax Identity Number Theft Scams.** Another trick is tax identity number theft, which is when a scammer uses your Social Security number to file a tax return in your name to collect a refund. Victims often do not realize this until they receive a written notice from the IRS that more than one return was filed in their name.

**E-Mail Phishing Scams.** You might receive an e-mail that appears to be from the IRS and include a link to a fake website intended to look like the official IRS website. These e-mails contain directions to “update your IRS e-file immediately” or other such language. These e-mails are **not** from the IRS.

**Remember:** The IRS will always contact you by mail, **never** by phone or e-mail.



**Additional Tips to Avoid Tax Scams.** The best way to avoid tax identity number theft is to file your taxes as early as possible, before a scammer has the chance to use your information to file a fake return. Jot down your Identity

Protection Pin (IP Pin) from the IRS before filing your return. This is a six-digit number, which, in addition to your Social Security number, confirms your identity.

Only deal with trustworthy tax preparation services, check websites carefully and make sure you are accessing the real IRS website.

**If you are the victim of a tax scam,** contact the IRS at 1-800-908-4490. You should also file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at [ftc.gov/complaint](http://ftc.gov/complaint) or by calling 1-877-FTC-HELP. The FTC also offers a personalized identity theft recovery plan at [identitytheft.gov](http://identitytheft.gov).

Also, do not hesitate to contact your legal services plan’s panel law firm to speak with an attorney.

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