

Tax Scams



Scammers are preying on unsuspecting taxpayers. Most of the scams are obvious (see the list of common scams below). None the less, taxpayers continue to fall victim to tax scam artists every day. A few simple facts will protect you from the vast majority of scams:

- 1) Phone calls, text messages, & eMails claiming to be from the IRS are scams. The IRS sends official communications via written letter.
- 2) Treat all communications (including written letters that appear to be on IRS letterhead) as *potential* scams. Even though such letters are likely authentic you shouldn't *automatically* assume that they are.
- 3) Most scammers prey on honest taxpayer's natural sense of fear. Never act impulsively in a state of fear. Always **pause and think** before taking any action and ask a trusted tax professional for a second opinion.

These facts should be enough to keep you safe. However, to learn more about the most common tax scams visit the following website to view the IRS' list of the "Dirty Dozen" tax scams.

<http://www.irs.gov/uac/Newsroom/Dirty-Dozen>

Highlights from the IRS' "Dirty Dozen" tax scams (for the full text visit the above website):

- **Phone Scams:** Aggressive and threatening phone calls by criminals impersonating IRS agents remain an ongoing threat to taxpayers. Many of these scammers can even "trick" your telephone caller ID to make it seem like they are with the IRS, another government agency, or local law enforcement. The IRS has seen a surge of these phone scams in recent months as scam artists threaten police arrest, deportation, license revocation and other things.
- **Phishing:** Taxpayers need to be on guard against fake emails or websites looking to steal personal information. The IRS will not send you an email about a bill or refund out of the blue. Don't click on one claiming to be from the IRS. Also, remember the official IRS website is IRS.gov. Don't be fooled by any other domain (such as a website ending with a .com, .net, .org, or other domain).
- **Identity Theft:** The IRS continues to aggressively pursue criminals that file fraudulent returns using someone else's Social Security number. The IRS is making progress on this front but taxpayers still need to be careful and take measures to protect their personal information such as Social Security Numbers.
- **Return Preparer Fraud:** Taxpayers need to be on the lookout for unscrupulous return preparers. The vast majority of tax professionals provide honest high-quality service. But there are some dishonest preparers who set up shop each filing season to perpetrate refund fraud, identity theft, and other scams.
- **Inflated Refund Claims:** Taxpayers need to be on the lookout for anyone promising inflated refunds. Taxpayers should be wary of anyone who asks them to sign a blank return, promise a big refund before looking at their records, or charge fees based on a percentage of the refund. Scam artists use flyers, advertisements, phony store fronts, and word-of-mouth in seeking victims.
- **Fake Charities:** Taxpayers should be on guard against groups masquerading as charitable organizations to attract donations from unsuspecting contributors. Contributors should take a few extra minutes to ensure their hard-earned money goes to legitimate and currently eligible charities. IRS.gov has the tools taxpayers need to check out the status of charitable organizations. Be wary of charities with names that are similar to familiar or nationally known organizations.

Additional information about tax scams is available on IRS social media sites, including YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/irsvideos> and Tumblr: <http://internalrevenueservice.tumblr.com>

You can report scams to the IRS via email at phishing@irs.gov