



Things To Know While You Prepare For Tax Season

With tax season in full swing Sheriff Jamie Patton is warning taxpayers to watch out for scam artists trying to steal your money or your identity – or both.

Scammers often alter caller ID numbers to make it look like the IRS or another agency is calling. The callers use IRS titles and fake badge numbers to appear legitimate. They may use the victim's name, address and other personal information to make the call sound official. "Mailing address and employment history may be easy to find online, and just because someone has that information does not mean they are from the IRS," says Sheriff Patton.

The Internal Revenue Service is warning taxpayers of several scams that are known to surface this time of the year.

- 1) **Phone Scams**: Taxpayers are getting threatening phone calls by criminals impersonating IRS agents. Scam artists are threatening police arrest, deportation, and license revocation. Scam artists claim their intended victim owe unpaid taxes, then demand immediate payment via a prepaid debit card or wire transfer. With the technology today the scam artists can disguise their phone number to make it look like they are calling from the IRS.
- 2) **Identity Theft**: Scam artist will use the IRS name and logo to appear legitimate, then they collect personal information. After collecting your personal information, the Scam artist then open new accounts using the victim's information or steal from existing bank accounts. Scam artist also use the victim's personal information to file a tax return.
- 3) **Fraudulent Tax Return Services**: There are a lot of different companies that provide tax services. While most companies provide honest service, there are some companies that will take advantage of taxpayers. They may skim off the victims refunds or inflate fees. Make sure the preparer is putting their Preparer Tax Identification on each form. This is recommended by the IRS. Be on the lookout for preparers that charge a percentage of the refund as a preparation fee and not signing the returns. They may also promise a larger refund then normal.
- 4) **Phisherman**: Scam involving emails or text message appearing to be from the agency, instructing you to "update your IRS e-file immediately." It will give you a link to click on. This is just another way for the scam artist to get your personal information.
- 5) **Inflated Refunds**: Anyone who promises you a big refund without looking at your records first should be avoided. If it sounds too good to be true, guess what? It is.

The IRS reminds taxpayers to claim their refunds through the filing on their annual tax returns, do not click on links or open any attachments in emails that are unsolicited or that come from unknown sources.

Things the IRS will never do:

- Call to demand immediate payment, nor will the agency call about taxes owed without first having mailed you a bill.
- Demand that you pay taxes without giving you the opportunity to question or appeal the amount they say you owe.
- Require you to use a specific payment method for your taxes, such as a prepaid debit card.
- Ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.
- Threaten to bring in local police or other law-enforcement groups to have you arrested for not paying.

Residents are encouraged to call the Sheriff's Office or their local Police Department if they should have questions or concerns about a suspicious phone call, letter or e-mail correspondence.