

IRS Warns of Tax-time Scams

It's true: tax scams proliferate during the income tax filing season. This year's season opens on Jan. 31. The IRS provides the following scam warnings so you can protect yourself and avoid becoming a victim of these crimes:

- Be vigilant of any unexpected communication purportedly from the IRS at the start of tax season.
- Don't fall for phone and phishing email scams that use the IRS as a lure. Thieves often pose as the IRS using a bogus refund scheme or warnings to pay past-due taxes.
- The IRS doesn't initiate contact with taxpayers by email to request personal or financial information. This includes any type of e-communication, such as text messages and social media channels.
- The IRS doesn't ask for PINs, passwords or similar confidential information for credit card, bank or other accounts.
- If you get an unexpected email, don't open any attachments or click on any links contained in the message. Instead, forward the email to phishing@irs.gov. For more about how to [report phishing scams](#) involving the IRS visit the genuine IRS website, IRS.gov.

Here are several steps you can take to help protect yourself against scams and identity theft:

- Don't carry your Social Security card or any documents that include your Social Security number or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number.
- Don't give a business your SSN or ITIN just because they ask. 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 and are sure of the recipient.
- Be careful when you choose a tax preparer. Most preparers provide excellent service, but there are a few who are unscrupulous. Refer to [Tips to Help you Choose a Tax Preparer](#) for more details.

For more on this topic, see the special [identity theft section](#) on IRS.gov. Also check out [IRS Fact Sheet 2014-1](#), IRS Combats Identity Theft and Refund Fraud on Many Fronts.