

What Taxpayers Should Know about Identity Theft and Taxes

Protecting taxpayers and their tax refunds from identity theft is a top priority for the IRS. This year the IRS expanded its efforts to better protect taxpayers and help victims dealing with this difficult issue.

When your personal information is lost or stolen, it can lead to identity theft. Identity thieves sometimes use your personal information to file a tax return to claim a tax refund. Then, when you file your own tax return, the IRS will not accept it and will notify you that a return was already filed using your name and social security number. Often, learning that your return was not accepted or receiving a contact from the IRS about a problem with your tax return is the first time you become aware that you're a victim of identity theft.

How to avoid becoming an identity theft victim.

- **Guard your personal information.** Identity thieves can get your personal information in many ways. This includes stealing your wallet or purse, posing as someone who needs information about you, looking through your trash, or stealing information you provide to an unsecured website or in an unencrypted email.
- **Watch out for IRS impersonators.** Be aware that the IRS does not initiate contact with taxpayers by email or social media channels to request personal or financial information or notify people of an audit, refund or investigation. Scammers may also use phone calls, faxes, websites or even in-person contacts. If you're suspicious that it's not really the IRS contacting you, don't respond. Visit the IRS's [Report Phishing](#) web page to see what to do.

How to know if you are, or might be, a victim of identity theft.

Your identity may have been stolen if the IRS notifies you that:

- **You filed more than one tax return or someone has already filed using your information;**
- **You owe taxes for a year when you were not legally required to file and did not file; or**
- **You were paid wages from an employer where you did not work.**

Respond quickly using the contact information in the letter you received from the IRS so that they can begin to correct and secure your tax account.

If you think you may be at risk for identity theft due to a lost or stolen purse or wallet, questionable credit card activity, an unexpected bad credit report or any other way, contact the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit toll-free at 1-800-908-4490. The IRS will then take steps to secure your tax account. The [Federal Trade Commission](#) also has helpful information about reporting identity theft.

If you have information about the identity thief who used or tried to use your information, file a complaint with the [Internet Crime Complaint Center](#).

For more information – including how to report identity theft, phishing and related fraudulent activity – visit the [Identity Protection](#) home page on IRS.gov and click on the Identity Theft link at the bottom of the page.

The IRS recently announced that a year-long nationwide focus on tax refund fraud and identity theft has resulted in more than 100 arrests in 32 states and Puerto Rico. In January 2013 alone, the IRS targeted 389 identity theft suspects resulting in 734 enforcement actions. To learn more, see [IRS Intensifies National Crackdown on Identity Theft](#) on IRS.gov.

Additional IRS Resources:

[Identity Protection Tips](#)

[FS-2013-2](#), IRS Combats Identity Theft and Refund Fraud on Many Fronts

[FS-2013-3](#), Tips for Taxpayers, Victims about Identity Theft and Tax Returns

[FS-2012-8](#), Taxpayer Guide to Identity Theft

IRS YouTube Videos:

Protect Yourself from Identity Theft - [English](#)

Are You a Victim of Identity Theft? - [English](#)

IRS Podcasts

Protect Yourself from Identity Theft - [English](#)

Are You a Victim of Identity Theft? - [English](#)

Please do not hesitate to contact our office if we may be of assistance regarding this or any other matter – we are here to help!