

# IRS Warns Taxpayers to Guard Against New Tricks by Scam Artists; Losses Top \$20 Million

WASHINGTON — Following the emergence of new variations of widespread tax scams, the Internal Revenue Service today issued another warning to taxpayers to remain on high alert and protect themselves against the ever-evolving array of deceitful tactics scammers use to trick people.

These schemes — which can occur over the phone, in e-mails or through letters with authentic looking letterhead — try to trick taxpayers into providing personal financial information or scare people into making a false tax payment that ends up with the criminal.

The Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) has received reports of roughly 600,000 contacts since October 2013. TIGTA is also aware of nearly 4,000 victims who have collectively reported over \$20 million in financial losses as a result of tax scams.

“We continue to see these aggressive tax scams across the country,” IRS Commissioner John Koskinen said. “Scam artists specialize in being deceptive and fooling people. The IRS urges taxpayers to be extra cautious and think twice before answering suspicious phone calls, emails or letters.”

Scammers posing as IRS agents first targeted those they viewed as most vulnerable, such as older Americans, newly arrived immigrants and those whose first language is not English. These criminals have expanded their net and are now targeting virtually anyone.

In a new variation, scammers alter what appears on your telephone caller ID to make it seem like they are with the IRS or another agency such as the Department of Motor Vehicles. They use fake names, titles and badge numbers. They use online resources to get your name, address and other details about your life to make the call sound official. They even go as far as copying official IRS letterhead for use in email or regular mail.

Brazen scammers will even provide their victims with directions to the nearest bank or business where the victim can obtain a means of payment such as a debit card. And in another new variation of these scams, con artists may then provide an actual IRS address where the victim can mail a receipt for the payment — all in an attempt to make the scheme look official.

The most common theme with these tricks seems to be fear. Scammers try to scare people into reacting immediately without taking a moment to think through what is actually happening.

These scam artists often angrily threaten police arrest, deportation, license revocation or other similarly unpleasant things. They may also leave “urgent” callback requests, sometimes through “robo-calls,” via phone or email. The emails will often contain a fake IRS document with a telephone number or email address for your reply.

It is important to remember the official IRS website is [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov). Taxpayers are urged not to be confused or misled by sites claiming to be the IRS but ending in .com, .net, .org or other designations instead of .gov. Taxpayers should never provide personal information, financial or otherwise, to suspicious websites or strangers calling out of the blue.

Below are five things scammers often do that the real IRS would never do.

## **The IRS will never:**

- Angrily demand immediate payment over the phone, nor will the agency call about taxes owed without first having mailed you a bill.
- Threaten to bring in local police or other law-enforcement groups to have you arrested for not paying.

- 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.

**Here's what you should do if you think you're the target of an IRS impersonation scam:**

- If you actually do owe taxes, call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040. IRS workers can help you with a payment issue.
- If you know you don't owe taxes or do not immediately believe that you do, you can report the incident to the [Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration \(TIGTA\)](#) at 1-800-366-4484.
- If you've been targeted by any scam, be sure to contact the Federal Trade Commission and use their "[FTC Complaint Assistant](#)" at FTC.gov. Please add "IRS Telephone Scam" to the comments of your complaint.

For more information on reporting tax scams, go to IRS.gov and type "scam" in the search box.