

THE IRS: TELEPHONE TAX SCAMS CONTINUE TO BE A SERIOUS THREAT FOR 2017



Since 2013, over 10,000 victims have collectively paid over \$54 million as a result of phone tax scams, so says the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA). Aggressive and threatening phone calls by criminals impersonating IRS agents remain a major threat to taxpayers. While IRS-like scams tend to peak at tax time, variation of this phone fraud occur year-round.

How do the scams work?

Scammers make unsolicited calls claiming to be IRS officials. They demand that the victim pay a bogus tax bill. They trick the victim into sending cash via a wire transfer, prepaid debit card or gift card (like an iTunes card). None of these means are traceable or refundable. Scammers may also leave “urgent” callback requests through phone robo-calls or target email accounts by sending fraudulent phishing emails (ones which appear legitimate and convince victims to provide personal information).

Many phone scams use threats to intimidate and bully a victim into paying. Thieves may even threaten to arrest, deport or revoke the driver’s license of a victim if they don’t get the money. Other scammers will promise bigger refunds in exchange for personal information.

Scammers often alter caller ID numbers to make it look like the IRS or another agency is calling. The callers use IRS employee 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.

Don’t be a victim. While the scammers’ tactics may change, how the IRS contacts taxpayers does not. **The IRS will never:**

- Call to demand immediate payment using a specific payment method such as a prepaid debit card, gift card or wire transfer. Generally, the IRS will first mail a bill to any taxpayer who owes taxes.
- Threaten to immediately bring in local police or other law-enforcement groups to have the taxpayer arrested for not paying.
- Demand that taxes be paid without giving the taxpayer the opportunity to question or appeal the amount owed.
- Ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.

A surprise call from the IRS is almost certainly NOT from the real IRS. The best advice? **HANG UP!**

(<https://www.irs.gov/uac/newsroom/phone-scams-remain-serious-threat-no-2-on-the-irs-dirty-dozen-list-of-tax-scams-for-2017>)