

From the Desk of Detective Dave

Tax Season Brings Tax Scams

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It's that time of year again when most of us are preparing for the April 15th deadline to file our tax returns. Each year the Frederick Police Department advises residents to be aware of the scams associated with the tax season. It seems the scammers / ID thieves are getting a head start this year.

Identity Theft is the number one tax scheme reported to the IRS. Scammers use your personal information such as your name, Social Security number or any other identifying information, to fraudulently file a tax return and claim your refund.

Phone scams are the method of choice for ID thieves as they can gather a lot of your personal information and money very quickly. These scammers pretend to be IRS agents and tell the victims they owe money and if they don't pay it immediately, they'll be arrested. Typically, they will call after hours or during times that aren't convenient to contact the IRS for verification. Scammers use fake names and IRS badge numbers such as "Joe Williams" or "Mike Stanley" and any series of numbers to represent their fake badge number. They may be able to recite the last four digits of your SSN and will likely ask you to verify your entire SSN. Scammers will imitate an IRS phone number by "spoofing" it to make it look legitimate on caller ID. They may also send bogus emails to some victims to support their calls. If you don't pay then the scammers will hang up and call back pretending to be the police or the Department of Motor Vehicles threatening arrest or revocation of your driver's license.

Be aware of phishing scams where criminals attempt to steal your personal and / or financial information by using fake email or fake websites. Most of these emails ask for personal information and install spyware or malware on your computer to steal your personal information. The IRS doesn't initiate contact with taxpayers by email to request personal or financial information. Their official form of contact is by letter through the United States Postal Service.

If you believe you are at risk of identity theft due to lost or stolen personal information, contact the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit at 1.800.908.4490. For more written and video information about tax scams and consumer alerts, go to: <https://www.irs.gov/uac/Tax-Scams-Consumer-Alerts>.

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