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| 😊   |  | | --- | | **SCAM AND FRAUD PREVENTION-WHAT ARE TAX REFUND SCAMS,** continued…  **WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF COMMON TAX SCAMS?** continued…  **Below are some examples of tax scams you may encounter in the wild**: continued…  **HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF FROM TAX SCAMS?** continued…   1. **Ask for help**: If you get a call, text, or email that makes you go “Hmm…”, talk to a trusted family member or friend before taking any action. Scammers rely on fear and anxiety that often lead people to make impulsive decisions. 2. **Report suspected scams**: If you suspect a tax scam, report it using the resources below. It’s not just about protecting yourself. Reporting this activity alerts authorities so they can hold scammers accountable and work to shut them down.   -IRS phishing email reporting: Forward scam emails to [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov).  -Federal Trade Commission (FTC): Report fraud on the FTC website.  -Identify/Theft.gov: If you suspect your identity was stolen through a tax scam, report it here.  They’ll also help you create a recovery plan.  NOTE: If you had money taken from your account, file a report with your local police department  immediately and contact your bank.  Stay vigilant – and spread the word.  Online scammers are constantly inventing more elaborate schemes designed to fool even the savviest taxpayers. But you can stay one step ahead by staying informed, alert, and cautious. Share this information with those you care about to help keep them safe. The more people who can spot tax scams, the harder it is for scammers to continue their deceptive games. And that’s a win for all of us. |   😊  😊Page 04 | 😊😊😊 | 😊 **FOR YOUR INFORMATION…**   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **SCAM AND FRAUD PREVENTION**   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **What Are Tax Refund Scams?**  **A Guide for Older Adults.** | A closeup of a 1040 IRS tax form with a calculator and ballpoint pen close by. | Online at NCOA’s March 13, 2025 Insights for Senior Centers; In partnership with [Trend Micro logo](https://www.trendmicro.com/en_us/forHome/products/trend-micro-check.html?utm_source=ncoa.org%20&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=TMC) Article date 02-13-2025.  SOURCE: Internal Revenue Service (IRS). IRS Criminal Investigation targets tax fraudsters, urges taxpayers to protect themselves this tax season. January 29, 2024. Found on the internet at https://www.irs.gov/compliance/criminal-investigation/irs-criminal-investigation-targets-tax-fraudsters-urges-taxpapers-to-protect-themselves-this-tax-season |   **KEY TAKEAWAYS**  *-Tax-related scams are on the rise, and older adults should be aware of the warning signs.*  *-It’s important to know the IRS will never call you to demand immediate payment or threaten you*  *with fines or arrest.*  *-Learn about the latest tax scams – and steps you can tale to keep your money and personal*  *information safe.*  Between the hassle of filing a return and anxiety about owing money, tax season is not everyone’s favorite time of year. What makes it even more stressful? The looming threat of tax refund scams. Tax-related scams are on the rise. In 2023, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Criminal Investigation (CI) unit opened 1,409 tax crime investigations and identified $5.5 billion in fraud. Older adults are especially vulnerable to these insidious schemes. Scammers know people in this age group often have substantial savings, retirement funds, and social Security benefits – making them high-value targets.  IRS tax refund scams can take a major financial and emotional toll on those they impact, and they can happen to anyone. Scammers are now using artificial intelligence (AI) and other powerful tools to appear legitimate. These predators are highly skilled at persuading taxpayers to hand over their money and personal data.  In this guide, you’ll learn to recognize the red flags of IRS scams – so you can stop fraud dead in its tracks. The first step is understanding how the IRS typically communicates with taxpayers.  **HOW DOES THE IRS CONTACT YOU?**  According to the agency’s official website, the IRS typically reaches out through regular postal mail first. If you’re wondering, “How do I know if an IRS notice is real?”, you can verify the letter or notice on the IRS site.  **To a lesser extent, the IRS may also contact you by**:  -**Email**: Only with your permission, unless you’re involved in an investigation.  -**Text**: Only with your permission.  -**Phone**: To verify information, discuss your case, or schedule a meeting.  Unannounced in-person visits from an IRS agent are rare, and in most cases, you’ll get a letter telling you about it ahead of time.  **What will the IRS not do**?  It also helps to know what actions the IRS will specifically not take in relation to your taxes.  The agency will not:  -Contact you or take payment on social media.  -Accept gift cards, wire transfers, or prepaid debit cards as payment.  -Request credit, debit, or gift card numbers over the phone.  -Threaten to call local police or immigration officials.  -Take your citizenship status, driver’s license, or business license.  -Leave pre-recorded voicemails (robocalls).  -Mail tax debt resolution advertisements.  *Continued on next page* |   😊Page 01 |

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| 😊   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **SCAM AND FRAUD PREVENTION-WHAT ARE TAX REFUND SCAMS,** continued…  **WHAT ARE SOME WARNING SIGNS OF AN IRS TAX SCAM?**  **Below are four typical signs that could mean you’ve encountered a scammer**:   1. **Requests for immediate payment**: The real IRS will never demand immediate payment over the phone, email, text, or social media. They only accept payments through official channels like IRS.gov or mailed checks. If someone insists you pay a tax bill via gift cards, wire transfers, or cryptocurrency, it’s not the IRS – it’s a scam. 2. **Threatening language**. Scammers use aggression to manipulate their targets – but as mentioned above, the IRS does not operate this way. Official tax issues are communicated through letters, not bullying phone calls or text messages. That’s why you should be suspicious of any call, email, or text that threatens arrest, deportation, or lawsuits for unpaid taxes. 3. **Generous refund offers**: Sounds too good to be true? It likely is. If you receive an out-of-the-blue email or call promising a massive refund you didn’t think you were getting, be wary. Scammers often use this trick to lure people into providing their personal details. The IRS does not contact taxpayers unexpectedly with big refund offers. 4. **Spelling and grammar errors or odd-looking links**: Scam emails and fake IRS websites often contain spelling mistakes, grammatical errors, or incorrect URLs (e.g., look for URLs that say “irsgov.com” instead of “irs.gov”).   “You have to look at the big picture,” Carmen Million, President and CEO at Better Business Bureau (BBB) of south-Central Louisiana, told WAFB. “Look at spellings, look at the email it’s coming from, the website it’s coming from, or if they’re asking you to click on the link, all of those are warning signs.”  **WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF COMMON TAX SCAMS?**  Scammers are more sophisticated than ever, and they’re constantly updating their tactics to deceive even the most skeptical consumers.  **Below are some examples of tax scams you may encounter in the wild**:   |  | | --- | | **UNPAID TAXES SCAM**  In this type of government imposter scam, criminal pose as real IRS agents. They call, email, or text taxpayers demanding immediate payment for money allegedly owed. Some use spoofed caller IDs to make it look like the call is coming directly from the IRS. Scammers also us AI technology like voice cloning to make their communications look and sound convincing.  **What this scam may look like**: Archie gets a phone call from an agent claiming he has an unpaid tax bill. His caller ID displays the letters “IRS”, so he thinks it’s the real deal. The agent is rude and threatening, explaining that Archie must settle his tax debt right away or face arrest. He instructs him how to make payment to the IRS via wire transfer. | | **STIMULUS PAYMENTS SCAM**  The BBB recently reported a growing tax scam where IRS impersonators text taxpayers promising $1,400 stimulus checks. Eligible taxpayers who did not claim this credit on their 2021 tax returns will indeed receive this money. But that payment is sent automatically without advance notification.  **What this scam may look like:** A text message pops up on Eleanor’s phone notifying her she’s eligible for an Economic Stimulus Payment. It says her money can be deposited in a matter of days. Elenor is prompted to click on the link in the text that leads to a realistic looking “IRS” website designed to get visitors to provide their personal data. | | **FAKE REFUND TAX SCAM**  In this phishing scheme, fraudsters contact consumers about a large tax refund they did not expect – and request they provide certain information to “process” it.  **What this scam may look like:** Glen receives an important-looking email that appears to be from the IRS. It says he’s eligible for a large tax refund and urges him to claim it by verifying his information using the link provided. This link brings Glen to a fraudulent yet authentic looking “IRS” website that requests his Social Security number and banking details. |   *Continued on next page* |   😊Page 02 | 😊😊😊 | 😊   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **SCAM AND FRAUD PREVENTION-WHAT ARE TAX REFUND SCAMS,** continued…  **WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF COMMON TAX SCAMS?** continued…  **Below are some examples of tax scams you may encounter in the wild**: continued…   |  | | --- | | **FAKE CHARITY TAX SCAM**  Major natural disasters and other widespread tragedies tend to draw out the con artists during tax season. They target taxpayers looking to make tax-deductible charitable donations.  **What this scam may look like**: Yvonne gets a phone call from someone claiming to be from a charity supporting victims of a recent hurricane. They try to pressure her into making an “urgent” donation and tell her it can be deducted from her taxes. They specifically request her to make the donation in the form of gift cards. | | **SOCIAL MEDIA TAX ADVICE SCAM**  Last year, the IRS warned of a tax scam circulating on TikTok and other social media platforms. In these fraudulent social media posts, “tax experts” dispense highly inaccurate tax advice paired with the promise of a bigger refund.  **What this scam may look like**: Charlie was scrolling through Facebook when a video caught his eye. It claimed he could get a bigger tax refund by filing Form 8944 – even though it’s meant for tax professionals requesting hardship waivers. Excited by the idea of a larger refund, Charlie followed the steps in the video and submitted the form with his return. Weeks later, he received a notice from the IRS, flagging his return with inaccurate information. Not only was his refund delayed, but he also faced potential penalties for filing a false claim. | | **ADVANCE-FEE TAX SCAM**  In this scam, criminals promise accelerated refunds or special tax credits in exchange for an up-front deposit. Once it’s paid, they disappear, leaving victims with no resolution (and a lighter wallet). Some scammers claim to work with the IRS Offer in Compromise (OIC) program to help consumers settle their tax debt for significantly less. But while OIC is a real program, it has strict requirements that disqualify many taxpayers.  **What this scam may look like**: Marco owes a sizable amount of money in back taxes. One day, he opens an email from an unknown company. It contains a compelling advertisement for a “tax relief” program that helps consumers dramatically reduce their tax debt to the IRS. Marco agrees to pay a large advance fee to secure these services. In the end, the company fails to deliver on its promise – and Marco is unable to get a refund of his deposit. |   **HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF FROM TAX SCAMS?**  IRS tax scams are more than just an inconvenience – they can have severe financial and personal consequences. But you can navigate the season safely by following these six tips:   1. **Verify everything**. The IRS primarily communicates through mail. If you receive a phone call claiming to be from the IRS, hang up and call the official IRS number (1-800-829-1040) to see if it’s legitimate. You can also use tools like Trend Micro ScamCheck, which analyzes emails, texts, URLs, phone numbers, ads, and social media posts quickly to identify fakes. 2. **Use secure channels**: File your taxes only through trusted websites (like IRS.gov) or a reputable tax preparer. Avoid tax services that contact you unexpectedly or make unrealistic refund promises. 3. **Never share sensitive info over phone or email**: The IRS will never ask for your full Social Security number, banking details, or credit card information via phone, email, or text. If someone asks for this information, you can safely assume it’s a scam. 4. **Check the source before clicking links**: Before clicking on any link in an email (or text), hover over it to reveal the full URL (web address). Also, examine the sender’s email address for subtle misspellings. Ignore attachments, since they may contain harmful software that can steal your data.   *Continued on next page* |   😊Page 03 |