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Phone Scams Continue to be a Serious Threat, Remain on IRS "Dirty Dozen" List of Tax Scams for the 2016 Filing Season

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WASHINGTON — Aggressive and threatening phone calls by criminals impersonating IRS agents remain a major threat to taxpayers, headlining the annual "Dirty Dozen" list of tax scams for the 2016 filing season, the Internal Revenue Service announced today.

The IRS has seen a surge of these phone scams as scam artists threaten police arrest, deportation, license revocation and other things. The IRS reminds taxpayers to guard against all sorts of con games that arise during any filing season.

"Taxpayers across the nation face a deluge of these aggressive phone scams. Don't be fooled by callers pretending to be from the IRS in an attempt to steal your money," said IRS Commissioner John Koskinen. "We continue to say if you are surprised to be hearing from us, then you're not hearing from us."

"There are many variations. The caller may threaten you with arrest or court action to trick you into making a payment," Koskinen added. "Some schemes may say you're entitled to a huge refund. These all add up to trouble. Some simple tips can help protect you."

The Dirty Dozen is compiled annually by the IRS and lists a variety of common scams taxpayers may encounter any time during the year. Many of these con games peak during filing season as people prepare their tax returns or hire someone to do so.

This January, the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) announced they have received reports of roughly 896,000 contacts since October 2013 and have become aware of over 5,000 victims who have collectively paid over \$26.5 million as a result of the scam.

"The IRS continues working to warn taxpayers about phone scams and other schemes," Koskinen said. "We especially want to thank the law-enforcement community, tax professionals, consumer advocates, the states, other government agencies and particularly the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration for helping us in this battle against these persistent phone scams."

Protect Yourself

Scammers make unsolicited calls claiming to be IRS officials. They demand that the victim pay a bogus tax bill. They con the victim into sending cash, usually through a prepaid debit card or wire transfer. They may also leave "urgent" callback requests through phone "robo-calls," or via a [phishing email](#).

Many phone scams use threats to intimidate and bully a victim into paying. They may even threaten to arrest, deport or revoke the license of their victim if they don't get the money.

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

Here are five things the scammers often do but the IRS will not do. Any one of these five things is a tell-tale sign of a scam.

The IRS will never:

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

If you get a phone call from someone claiming to be from the IRS and asking for money, here's what you should do:

If you don't owe taxes, or have no reason to think that you do:

- Do not give out any information. Hang up immediately.
- Contact TIGTA to report the call. Use their [“IRS Impersonation Scam Reporting”](#) web page. You can also call 800-366-4484.
- Report it to the Federal Trade Commission. Use the [“FTC Complaint Assistant”](#) on FTC.gov. Please add "IRS Telephone Scam" in the notes.

If you know you owe, or think you may owe tax:

- Call the IRS at 800-829-1040. IRS workers can help you.

Stay alert to scams that use the IRS as a lure. Tax scams can happen any time of year, not just at tax time. For more, visit [“Tax Scams and Consumer Alerts”](#) on IRS.gov.

Each and every taxpayer has a set of fundamental rights they should be aware of when dealing with the IRS. These are your [Taxpayer Bill of Rights](#). Explore your rights and our obligations to protect them on IRS.gov.

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