

IRS Telephone Scams

The IRS has seen a recent increase in local phone scams across the country, with callers pretending to be from the IRS in hopes of stealing money or identities from victims.



These phone scams include many variations, ranging from instances from where callers say the victims owe money or are entitled to a huge refund. Some calls can threaten arrest and threaten a driver's license revocation. Sometimes these calls are paired with follow-up calls from people saying they are from the local police department or the state motor vehicle department.

Characteristics of these scams can include:

- Scammers use fake names and IRS badge numbers. They generally use common names and surnames to identify themselves.
- Scammers may be able to recite the last four digits of a victim's Social Security Number.
- Scammers "spoof" or imitate the IRS toll-free number on caller ID to make it appear that it's the IRS calling.
- Scammers sometimes send bogus IRS emails to some victims to support their bogus calls.
- Victims hear background noise of other calls being conducted to mimic a call site.

After threatening victims with jail time or a driver's license revocation, scammers hang up and others soon call back pretending to be from the local police or DMV, and the caller ID supports their claim.

In another variation, one sophisticated phone scam has targeted taxpayers, including recent immigrants, throughout the country. Victims are told they owe money to the IRS and it must be paid promptly through a pre-loaded debit card or wire transfer. If the victim refuses to cooperate, they are then threatened with arrest, deportation or suspension of a business or driver's license. In many cases, the caller becomes hostile and insulting.

If you get a phone call from someone claiming to be from the IRS, here's what you should do: If you know you owe taxes or you think you might owe taxes, call the IRS at 800-829-1040. The IRS employees at that line can help you with a payment issue – if there really is such an issue.

It is important to keep in mind the IRS does not initiate contact with taxpayers by email or phone to request personal or financial information. **DO NOT** give out any personal or financial information by any type of electronic communication, such as text messages, social media channels, and e-mail.

The IRS will not:

- Call you to demand immediate payment. The IRS will not call you if you owe taxes without first sending you a bill in the mail.
- Demand that you pay taxes and not allow you to question or appeal the amount you owe.
- Require that you pay your taxes a certain way. For instance, require that you pay with a prepaid debit card.
- Ask for your credit or debit card numbers over the phone.
- Threaten to bring in police or other agencies to arrest you for not paying.