

# Tips for Taxpayers, Victims about Identity Theft and Tax Returns

## **IRS YouTube Videos**

[ID Theft: IRS Efforts on Identity Theft](#)

FS-2014-2, January 2014

Identity theft remains a top priority for the Internal Revenue Service in 2014. Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes nationwide, and refund fraud caused by identity theft is one of the biggest challenges facing the IRS. This year, the IRS continues to take new steps and strong actions to protect taxpayers and help victims of identity theft and refund fraud.

Stopping refund fraud related to identity theft is a top priority for the tax agency. The IRS is focused on preventing, detecting and resolving identity theft cases as soon as possible. The IRS has more than 3,000 employees working on identity theft cases. We have trained more than 35,000 employees who work with taxpayers to recognize and provide assistance when identity theft occurs.

Taxpayers can encounter identity theft involving their tax returns in several ways. One instance is where identity thieves try filing fraudulent refund claims using another person's identifying information, which has been stolen. Innocent taxpayers are victimized because their refunds are delayed.

Here are some tips to protect you from becoming a victim, and steps to take if you think someone may have filed a tax return using your name:

### **Tips to protect you from becoming a victim of identity theft**

- Don't carry your Social Security card or any documents that include your Social Security number (SSN) or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN).
- Don't give a business your SSN or ITIN just because they ask. Give it only when required.
- Protect your financial information.
- Check your credit report every 12 months.
- Secure personal information in your home.
- Protect your personal computers by using firewalls and anti-spam/virus software, updating security patches and changing passwords for Internet accounts.
- Don't give personal information over the phone, through the mail or on the Internet unless you have initiated the contact or you are sure you know who you are dealing with.

If your tax records are not currently affected by identity theft, but you believe you may be at risk due to a lost or stolen purse or wallet, questionable credit card activity or credit report, contact the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit at 800-908-4490, extension 245 (Monday - Friday, 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. local time; Alaska and Hawaii follow Pacific time).

### **If you believe you're a victim of identity theft**

Be alert to possible identity theft if you receive a notice from the IRS or learn from your tax professional that:

- More than one tax return for you was filed;
- You have a balance due, refund offset or have had collection actions taken against you for a year you did not file a tax return;
- IRS records indicate you received more wages than you actually earned or
- Your state or federal benefits were reduced or cancelled because the agency received information reporting an income change.

If you receive a notice from the IRS and you suspect your identity has been used fraudulently, respond immediately by calling the number on the notice.

If you did not receive an IRS notice but believe you've been the victim of identity theft, contact the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit at 800-908-4490, extension 245 right away so we can take steps to secure your tax account and match your SSN or ITIN.

Also, fill out the IRS Identity Theft Affidavit, [Form 14039](#). Please write legibly and follow the directions on the back of the form that relate to your specific circumstances.

In addition, we recommend you take additional steps with agencies outside the IRS:

- Report incidents of [identity theft to the Federal Trade Commission](#) at [www.consumer.ftc.gov](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov) or the FTC Identity Theft hotline at 877-438-4338 or TTY 866-653-4261.
- File a report with the local police.
- Contact the fraud departments of the three major credit bureaus:
  - Equifax – [www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com), 800-525-6285
  - Experian – [www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com), 888-397-3742
  - TransUnion – [www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com), 800-680-7289
- Close any accounts that have been tampered with or opened fraudulently.

More information is available at IRS.gov:

- <http://www.irs.gov/uac/Identity-Protection-Tips>
- Taxpayer Guide to Identity Theft -- <http://www.irs.gov/uac/Taxpayer-Guide-to-Identity-Theft>

### **Help if you have reported an identity theft case to the IRS and are waiting for your federal tax refund**

The IRS is working to speed up and further streamline identity theft case resolution to help innocent taxpayers.

The IRS more than doubled the level of employees dedicated to working identity theft cases between 2011 and 2012. As the IRS enters the 2014 filing season, we now have more than 3,000 employees working identity theft issues.

These are extremely complex cases to resolve, frequently touching on multiple issues and multiple tax years. Cases of resolving identity can be complicated by the thieves themselves contacting the IRS. Due to the complexity of the situation, this is a time-consuming process. Taxpayers are likely to see their refunds delayed for an extended period of time while we take the necessary actions to resolve the matter. A typical case can take about 180 days to resolve, and the IRS is working to reduce that time period.

If you have an open identity theft case that is being worked by the IRS, you need to continue to file your tax returns during this period.

For victims of identity theft who have previously been in contact with the IRS and **have not achieved a resolution to their case**, you may contact the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit, toll-free, at 800-908-4490. If you are unable to get your issue resolved and are experiencing financial difficulties, contact the Taxpayer Advocate Service toll-free at 877-777-4778.

### **More Information**

It is a top priority for the IRS to help victims and reduce the time it takes to resolve cases. In addition, the IRS continues to aggressively expand its efforts to protect and prevent refund fraud involving identity theft before it occurs as well as work with federal, state and local officials to pursue the perpetrators of this fraud.

For more information, see the special [identity theft](#) section on IRS.gov and [IRS Fact Sheet 2014-1](#), IRS Combats Identity Theft and Refund Fraud on Many Fronts.

*Page Last Reviewed or Updated: 07-Jan-2014*