

Anchin Alert

Anchin, Block & Anchin LLP
Accountants and Advisors



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Tips to Avoid IRS Phone Scams: What You Need to Know

On Friday, May 20th, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) sent an internal memo directing all IRS employees to no longer initiate contact with taxpayers by phone. With this in mind, if you get a call from someone claiming to be from the IRS – be wary and do not give out any personal information.

Phone call scams are on the rise and have cost victims more than **\$26 million** since October 2013. The IRS continues to warn consumers to guard against scam phone calls trying to steal taxpayer money and/or their identity.

Here are several examples of scams:

- **Scammers make unsolicited calls.** Thieves call taxpayers claiming to be IRS officials. They demand that the victim pay a phony 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 phishing emails.
- **Callers try to panic their victims.** Many phone scams use threats to intimidate and bully a victim into paying. They may even threaten to arrest, deport or revoke the driver’s license of their victim if they don’t get the money.
- **Scams use caller ID spoofing.** Scammers often alter caller ID 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.
- **Cons attempt new schemes all the time.** Some provide an actual IRS address where they tell the victim to mail a receipt for the payment they make. Others use emails that contain a fake IRS document with a phone number or an email address for a reply. These scams often use official IRS letterhead in emails or regular mail that they send to their victims. They try these ploys to make the scam look official.

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, they will not 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.

The IRS doesn’t **initiate** contact with taxpayers by email, text messages or social media to request personal or financial information. This includes requests for PIN numbers, passwords or similar access information for credit cards, banks or other financial accounts. During the 2016 tax season, the IRS has seen an estimated 400% surge in phishing and malware incidents.

If you receive suspicious IRS communication by email:

1. Don't reply.
2. Don't open any attachments. They can contain malicious code that may infect your computer or mobile phone.
3. Don't click on any links.
4. Send the e-mail to phishing@irs.gov.
5. Delete the original email.

If you have any questions regarding suspicious phone calls, emails or any tax notices please contact your Anchin Relationship Partner or the Anchin Tax Controversy Department at 212.840.3456.



Anchin, Block & Anchin LLP
Accountants and Advisors
1375 Broadway, New York, NY 10018
212.840.3456 • www.anchin.com



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