

Identity Theft

What?

Identity theft happens when someone uses personal information without your permission. The IRS has had problems with criminals filing fraudulent tax returns using stolen Social Security numbers.



How to prevent identity theft:

- Do not answer any emails or texts from the IRS. **The IRS does not send emails or text messages.** If you receive suspicious emails, you can report them to the IRS by sending an email to the following e-mail address: phishing@irs.gov.
- Do not click on any links sent by email or text message. Do not trust the authenticity of phone numbers in emails or texts.
- Do not send files with sensitive information as email attachments. This is true even if you are sending to a trusted person. Rather, you should use a file sharing service that encrypts the file.
- Be suspicious of all phone calls asking for personal information. This is especially true of calls claiming to be from the IRS. The IRS will first contact you by sending a written notice.
- Be suspicious of offers that seem too good to be true.
- Do not carry your Social Security number with you. Keep it in a secure location.
- Protect your computers with firewall, encryption, and anti-virus/anti-spam software.
- Use strong passwords and change them regularly. Longer passwords are better than shorter ones (use 12 characters at a minimum).
- Shred all documents containing personal information. If you are required to retain the document then put it in a safe area where it can't be accessed.
- Check your credit report regularly.

What if it happens to you?

- File an Identity Theft Affidavit (IRS Form 14039).
- Call the IRS Identity Theft Specialized Unit at 800-908-4490. You may also want to get an IP pin from IRS at irs.gov.
- If your purse or wallet containing personal information is stolen, contact all banks and credit cards to cancel and inform.
- Contact the credit bureaus about a fraud alert at the following numbers or even freeze credit:
 - Equifax: 800-525-6285
 - Experian: 888-397-3742
 - Trans Union: 800-680-7289
- If your Social Security number has been stolen, notify the Social Security office of Inspector General at 800-269-0271.
- The Federal Trade Commission has a toll-free Identification Theft helpline at 877-438-4338.
- File a police report.
- If the issue remains unresolved, the IRS will send you a PIN to file your taxes next year.
- If the issue is resolved, they will typically send you a letter informing you of such.