

Sample article for organizations to use to reach customers (427 word count)

Customize and post the following article on your websites and/or use in other communication vehicles to inform your customers about Identity theft. This article offers helpful tips to protect taxpayers from identity theft.

Protecting you and your tax refund is a top priority for the IRS

When personal information is lost or stolen, it can lead to identity theft and refund fraud. You may encounter identity theft involving your tax return in several ways. One way is when identity thieves try filing tax returns with fraudulent refund claims using your identifying information.

The IRS is often the first to inform victims that identity theft has occurred in the form of an IRS notice issued after they file their own returns. You may be a victim of identity theft if you receive a notice from the IRS stating that:

- You filed more than one tax return or someone has already filed using your information;
- You owe taxes for a year when you were not legally required to file and did not file; or
- You were paid wages from an employer where you did not work.

If you receive such a notice, the IRS advises you to respond quickly by using the contact information in the notice so that they can begin to correct and secure your tax accounts.

Here are some tips to protect you from becoming a victim:

- **Guard your personal information.** Identity thieves can get your personal information in many ways, including stealing your wallet or looking through your trash.
- **Watch out for IRS impersonators.** 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 with whom you are dealing. The IRS does not initiate contact with taxpayers by email or social media channels.
- **Protect information on your computer.** While preparing your tax return, protect it with a strong password. Once you e-file the return, take it off your hard drive and store it on a CD or flash drive in a safe place.

If you think you may be at risk for identity theft due to a lost or stolen purse or wallet, questionable credit card activity, an unexpected bad credit report or any other way, contact the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit toll-free at 1-800-908-4490. The IRS will then take steps to secure your tax account. The [Federal Trade Commission](#) also has helpful information about reporting identity theft.

If you have information about the identity thief who used or tried to use your information, file a complaint with the [Internet Crime Complaint Center](#).

For more information – including how to report identity theft, phishing and related fraudulent activity – visit the [Identity Protection](#) home page on IRS.gov and click on the Identity Theft link at the bottom of the page.

The IRS provides a variety of identity theft resources on IRS.gov including:

- [Identity Protection Tips](#)
- [FS-2013-2](#), IRS Combats Identity Theft and Refund Fraud on Many Fronts
- [FS-2013-3](#), Tips for Taxpayers, Victims about Identity Theft and Tax Returns
- [FS-2012-8](#), Taxpayer Guide to Identity Theft