

# IRS Fact Sheet

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## **IRS, States and Tax Industry Urge Taxpayers to Join the Effort to Combat Identity Theft**

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Taxes. Security. Together. We all have a role to play in protecting your data and fighting back against identity theft.

The Internal Revenue Service, state tax agencies and the private-sector tax industry enacted even more safeguards for 2016 to protect your federal and state tax accounts from identity thieves. (See Fact Sheet 2016-01, IRS, States and Tax Industry Combat Identity Theft and Refund Fraud on Many Fronts)

The public and private sectors have formed an even stronger partnership in face of a constantly evolving enemy – the identity thief. But there’s one more partner needed: you. We need your help.

We are asking you to join with us. We have launched a security awareness campaign that we call [Taxes. Security. Together.](#)

This is an effort to better inform you about the need to protect your personal, tax and financial data online and at home. People continue to fall prey to clever cybercriminals who trick them into giving up Social Security numbers, account numbers or password information. In turn, criminals use this information a variety of ways, including filing fraudulent tax returns.

We’ve listed a few common sense suggestions that can make a big difference.

### **A few highlights:**

- Always use security software with firewall and anti-virus protections. Make sure the security software is always turned on and can automatically update. Encrypt sensitive files such as tax records you store on your computer. Use strong passwords.
- Learn to recognize and avoid phishing emails, threatening calls and texts from thieves posing as legitimate organizations such as your bank, credit card companies and even the IRS. Do not click on links or download attachments from unknown or suspicious emails.

- Protect your personal data. Don't routinely carry your Social Security card, and make sure your tax records are secure. Treat your personal information like you do your cash; don't leave it lying around.

We've issued a series of [Security Awareness Tax Tips](#) that provide you with information you need to better protect yourself. And, we've created [Publication 4524, Security Awareness for Taxpayers](#), for a quick reference guide. Share the publication with friends and family. If you are a tax preparer, please print and share this publication with your clients.

## Know the Warning Signs

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

- More than one tax return was filed for you;
- You owe additional tax, have a 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.

## Steps for Victims of Tax-Related Identity Theft

All victims of identity theft should follow the recommendations of the Federal Trade Commission:

- File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at [Identitytheft.gov](http://Identitytheft.gov).
- Contact one of the three major credit bureaus to place a "fraud alert" on your account:
  - Equifax – [www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com), 888-766-0008
  - Experian – [www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com), 888-397-3742
  - TransUnion – [www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com), 800-680-7289
- Close any financial or credit accounts that have been tampered with or opened fraudulently.

If your SSN has been compromised and you know or suspect you may be a victim of tax-related identity theft, take these additional steps:

- Respond immediately to any IRS notice; call the number provided or, if directed, visit [IDVerify.irs.gov](http://IDVerify.irs.gov).
- Complete IRS Form 14039, Identity Theft Affidavit, if your e-filed return was rejected by a duplicate return was filed using your SSN.
- Continue to pay your taxes and file your tax return, even if you must do so by paper.
- If you previously contacted the IRS and **did not have a resolution**, contact the IRS for specialized assistance at 1-800-908-4490. We have teams available to assist.

The IRS has greatly reduced the time it takes to resolve identity theft cases but please know these are extremely complex cases, frequently touching on multiple issues and multiple tax years. It can be time consuming.

**Related Items:**

- [Identity Protection](#)
- [Taxpayer Guide to Identity Theft](#)
- [Publication 5027](#), Identity Theft Information for Taxpayers