New Tax Scams Popping Up

Tax scammers have come up with new ways to try to steal personal information, and the Federal Trade Commission is warning consumers this tax season to educate themselves on the new scamming methods.

How do these scams work?
Criminals are filing fake tax returns and having them deposited into victims' bank accounts. Then, the scammer calls the account owner claiming to be an IRS agent and demands the account holder return the money. When the money is returned, the victim is actually sending the money to the criminal and not the IRS. In other instances, the fake IRS agent threatens legal action, arrest or the blacklisting of the victim's Social Security number, and the thief sometimes will give the victim a fake case number and phone number to call to return the refund.

Another tax scam involves fake tax preparation websites and phone numbers. When consumers search online for a tax-preparation service, imposter sites pop up. The sites look legitimate, and when victims enter personal information, it is sent to the scammers.

What if I'm a victim?
Visit identitytheft.gov to report it to the FTC. File an Identity Theft Affidavit with the IRS electronically, and get a personal recovery plan.

Always report all scams and fraud to your local law enforcement agency's non-emergency number. If you believe someone is in danger, call 911. Report all scams and financial abuse to the state attorney general, and file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at ftc.gov/complaint.

How do I protect myself?
If you get an unexpected tax refund, follow the IRS guidelines as to how to properly return the money. There are different methods for electronic deposits and paper checks. The instructions are outlined on irs.gov.

Remember, the IRS will never initiate contact with you via phone.

To avoid the fake tax-preparation sites, use a secure internet connection if filing online, or mail your return directly to the IRS via the U.S. Post Office.

If you use an online service, look for the tax preparer identification number. The IRS requires all paid tax preparers to have one.