

Tax-Related Identity Theft

How Can You Protect Yourself?

- **File taxes early.** The sooner you file your taxes, the sooner the window of opportunity closes for a scammer to steal your identity or inflict tax-related fraud.
- **Don't use public Wi-Fi.** Public Wi-Fi is notoriously easy to hijack (either by hacking into your computer directly or spoofing a similar Wi-Fi network name to trick you into logging into the scammer's network). If you have to use public Wi-Fi, make sure you utilize a VPN to hide your computer from potential scammers.
- **Don't confirm personal information by email or over the phone.** The only exception to the rule is if you are working personally with a CPA, and even then remain extra vigilant. Double check that the phone number or email address from which your accountant is reaching out matches the contact information on their website or business card before you respond.
- **Strengthen your passwords.** When transmitting tax-related information or setting up accounts through the IRS or websites like TurboTax, make sure you use strong passwords and 2-Factor authentication whenever possible.
- **Get an Identity Protection PIN.** The IRS allows you to set up an Identity Protection PIN (IP PIN), a six-digit number that prevents someone else from filing a tax return using your Social Security number or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number. Think of it as an extra padlock on your tax-related information!

Watch for Warning Signs.

No matter how careful you are, there's always a chance that your personal information may fall into the wrong hands. Watch for warning signs that you've been hacked, including any notices from the IRS regarding income from a job you did not have or benefits (such as unemployment or disability) for which you did not apply.