

BUSINESSSAFE

BusinessSafe is designed to aid businesses in protecting the safety and well-being of Florida's residents and visitors from threats. BusinessSafe provides private sector partners with open source information, analysis and resources to help protect their businesses and communities.

Florida Fusion Center 21-049

April 2021, Issue #48

BusinessSafe Threat Topic: IRS Scams

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is the federal government agency tasked with collecting federal taxes from individuals and businesses. IRS scams are an ongoing concern, especially during tax season. This year, tax season has been expanded with the IRS extending the 2021 tax filing deadline to May 17, 2021. IRS scams can impact anyone and often occur over the telephone or through email. There are many variations of IRS scams, and many can be financially and emotionally draining to the victims. For a general overview of variations of the IRS Imposter Scam, visit the [Federal Trade Commission](#) website.

Criminal Activity:

- 1. Fraudulent tax filings:** Scammers may attempt to use others' personally identifiable information to fraudulently file taxes and steal tax returns. This is problematic for victims because if taxes are filed fraudulently prior to the legitimate filing, the legitimate tax return will be rejected by the IRS.

[Two South Florida Residents Sentenced to Prison Terms for Stolen Identity and Tax Refund Fraud Scheme](#)

[Woman Sentenced to Prison in Tax Refund, Student Loan Scams](#)
- 2. Scammers may call and pose as IRS representatives.** These criminal actors are likely to provide victims with either fake names or names of actual IRS employees along with fraudulent IRS badge numbers. In some instances, scammers may even provide the last four digits of the victim's social security number to further validate the scam.

[Pinellas Detectives Warn Residents About IRS Phone Call Scam](#)

[IRS: Be Vigilant Against Phone Scams](#)
- 3. Fraudulent or "Ghost" Tax Preparers:** Individuals may pose as legitimate tax preparers and accept payment to fill out tax documentation at the request of a taxpayer. The IRS requires that anyone who is paid to prepare or assists in preparing tax returns to have a valid preparer tax identification number (PTIN). Also, paid preparers must sign and include their PTIN on the return. Fraudulent preparers will intentionally not sign the forms themselves or include their PTIN, instead instructing the taxpayer to sign and mail them to the IRS themselves. The IRS offers suggestions for [choosing a tax professional](#).

[Federal Court Shuts Down Orlando Tax Return Preparer](#)

[Beware of "Ghost" Preparers Who Don't Sign Tax Returns](#)



Florida Fusion Center
(800) 342-0820

FLBusinessSafe@FDLE.state.fl.us

Author: FL8642, Approval: FL8600, HSEC:1, FSIN:1.2, 1.3, 3.1, 3.9 FFC:4.1, 4.3, 4.4

4. **Fraudulent IRS emails:** Scammers posing as the IRS will send an email to tax preparers or taxpayers requesting personal identifiable information, payment for nonexistent taxes owed, or claiming the taxpayer has a pending refund. The scammers may threaten the taxpayer with legal or criminal charges if payment is not immediately received. Some emails may also have links that contain ransomware or lead to a fraudulent IRS website requesting personal information. This data can be used for future attacks including identity theft.

[College Students Targeted in Newest IRS Scam](#)
[IRS Scam Emails Ask Tax Preparers for EFIN Information](#)
[IRS Domain Spoofed in Fraud Campaign](#)

Tips to Protect Yourself from IRS Scams:

- The IRS will not call and demand immediate payment. The IRS will also not call and ask for credit or debit card information over the phone. Additionally, the IRS will not require you to pay without the opportunity to formally appeal.
- The IRS will not initiate contact with taxpayers by email to request personal or financial information.
- The IRS will not require payments be made with gift cards, prepaid debit cards, or green dot prepaid cards.
- The IRS will not threaten to have local law enforcement arrest you for not paying taxes.
- If you receive unexpected tax forms, including those claiming unemployment benefits which you did not file for or receive, you may be the victim of identity theft. The IRS offers guidance to taxpayers who may be victims of identity theft on their [website](#).

Resources for Victims:

- Victims of tax-related identity theft can reach out to the IRS for guidance via their [Taxpayer Guide to Identity Theft](#).
- If you believe you are a victim of an IRS scam, you can report it to the [Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration](#) and file a complaint with the [Federal Trade Commission](#).
- For more information on IRS scams, visit the Florida Office of the Attorney General [website](#).
- If you believe you are a victim of fraudulent unemployment filings, you can file a report with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity on their [website](#), or by calling 1-833-FL-APPLY (1-833-352-7759). Their [Florida's Identity Theft Victim Kit](#) also offers further guidance.

To sign up to receive *BusinessSafe* directly to your email, visit our [website](#).



Florida Fusion Center
 (800) 342-0820

FLBusinessSafe@FDLE.state.fl.us

Author: FL8642, Approval: FL8600, HSEC:1, FSIN:1.2, 1.3, 3.1, 3.9 FFC:4.1, 4.3, 4.4