

## Tax Related Identity Theft

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Tax return filing season has begun and folks are gathering documents necessary to file their returns by the April 17<sup>th</sup> deadline. This is also the season where law enforcement agencies across the country see an increase in identity theft reports related to the filing of fraudulent tax returns. According to the IRS tax related identity theft occurs when someone uses your stolen Social Security number to file a tax return and claim a fraudulent refund. Most people are unaware their identity has been stolen in this manner until they try to file their returns electronically and are notified that a return has already been filed for their Social Security number. Should you find yourself in this situation you should take the following steps:

- File a police report with your local law enforcement agency
- File a complaint with the FTC at [www.identitytheft.gov](http://www.identitytheft.gov)
- Contact one of the three credit bureaus to place a fraud alert on your credit records:
  - [www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com) or 1-888-766-0008
  - [www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com) or 1-888-397-3742
  - [www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com) or 1-800-680-7289
- Check your credit report and close any accounts that were opened by the identity thief
- If you suspect your Social Security number has been compromised or you suspect you are a victim of tax related identity theft, respond immediately to any IRS notification you receive and call the number provided (**NOTE: The IRS does not contact anyone by email, text messaging, social media, or phone calls seeking personal or financial information**).
- Complete IRS Form 14039 Identity Theft Affidavit, which can be found at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) and file your taxes in paper format with the form attached.

The IRS, state governments, and the tax industry recommend taking the following steps to prevent tax related identity theft:

- Always use security software with firewall and antivirus protections
- Use strong passwords
- Learn to recognize and avoid phishing emails, threatening phone calls, text messages and other forms of communication from thieves posing as legitimate organizations that you do business with. Many of these messages are sent seeking your personal or financial information.
- Do not click on links or attachments from suspicious emails.
- Protect your personal data. Do not routinely carry your Social Security card and ensure your tax records are secure.

More information can be found at [www.irs.gov/identitytheft](http://www.irs.gov/identitytheft) or [www.identitytheft.gov](http://www.identitytheft.gov) and of course anytime you have questions or concerns about identity theft you can call your local police department.