



TAX IDENTITY THEFT AWARENESS WEEK

Have You Heard About Tax Identity Theft?

Are you ready for tax season? If you haven't heard about tax identity theft, you may not be.

Tax identity theft happens when someone files a phony tax return using your personal information — like your Social Security number — to get a tax refund from the IRS. It also can happen when someone uses your Social Security number to get a job or claims your child as a dependent on a tax return. Tax identity theft is the most common form of identity theft reported to the Federal Trade Commission. The IRS says tax identity theft is a top priority and says it has hired new staff, explored new technologies, and adopted new procedures to fight it.

For these reasons, CPI is participating in Tax Identity Theft Awareness Week, along with other federal, state, and local officials and law enforcement agencies. Here's what you can do to lessen the chance you'll be a victim:

- File your tax return early in the tax season, if you can.
- Use a secure internet connection if you file electronically, or mail your tax return directly from the post office.
- Shred copies of your tax return, drafts, or calculation sheets you no longer need.
- Respond to all mail from the IRS as soon as possible.

- Know the IRS won't contact you by email, text, or social media. If the IRS needs information, it will contact you by mail.
- Never give out your Social Security number (SSN) unless necessary.
- Research a tax preparer thoroughly before you hand over personal information.
- If your SSN has been compromised, contact the IRS: ID Theft Protection Specialized Unit at 1-800-908-4490.
- Check your credit report at least once a year for free at annualcreditreport.com to make sure no other accounts have been opened in your name.

What if you're a victim? Tax identity theft victims typically find out about the crime when they get a letter from the IRS saying that more than one tax return was filed in their name, or IRS records show they received wages from an employer they don't know. If you get a letter like this, don't panic. Contact the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit at 1-800-908-4490.

More information about tax identity theft is available from the FTC at <http://www.ftc.gov/idtheft>, the IRS at irs.gov/identitytheft, and from your local IRS office.