

Press Release:

IRS PHONE SCAMS

The IRS continues to hear complaints from taxpayers regarding phone scams to collect "delinquent" taxes. TIGTA (Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration) has received 90,000 complaints through its telephone hotline. TIGTA has identified approximately 1,100 victims who have lost an estimated \$5 million from the scams.

"There are clear warning signs about these scams, which continue at high levels throughout the nation," said IRS Commissioner John Koskinen in a statement.

"Taxpayers should remember their first contact with the IRS will not be a call from out of the blue, but through official correspondence sent through the mail. A big red flag for these scams are angry, threatening calls from people who say they are from the IRS and urging immediate payment. This is not how we operate. People should hang up immediately and contact TIGTA or the IRS."

The calls are abrasive, aggressive, and downright threatening. The caller will demand that the taxpayer go to their bank, and call them back when they are there to get instructions on where to wire the funds. If the intended victim refuses to pay, then they threaten to send the police and have them arrested. If the victim does hang up it is likely that the scammer will immediately call back to continue the harassment.

Remind your clients that the IRS does not make an initial contact by phone. IRS does not request personal information by phone and does not demand payment by credit card or direct bank wire. The best advice is to hang up and contact the IRS or the FTC to file a complaint.

The callers who commit this fraud often:

- Use common names and fake IRS badge numbers.
- Know the last four digits of the victim's Social Security Number.
- Make caller ID information appear as if the IRS is calling.
- Send bogus IRS e-mails to support their scam.
- Call a second time claiming to be the police or department of motor vehicles, and the caller ID again supports their claim.

If you get a call from someone claiming to be with the IRS asking for a payment, here's what to do:

- If you owe Federal taxes, or think you might owe taxes, hang up and call the IRS at 800-829-1040. IRS workers can help you with your payment questions.
- If you don't owe taxes, call and report the incident to TIGTA at 800-366-4484.
- You can also file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at www.FTC.gov. Add "IRS Telephone Scam" to the comments in your complaint.

TIGTA and the IRS encourage taxpayers to be alert for phone and e-mail scams that use the IRS name. The IRS will never request personal or financial information by e-mail, texting or any social media. You should forward scam e-mails to phishing@irs.gov. Don't open any attachments or click on any links in those e-mails.