



IR-2016-20, Fake Charities Are a Problem and on the IRS Dirty Dozen List of Tax Scams for 2016

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Fake Charities Are a Problem and on the IRS Dirty Dozen List of Tax Scams for 2016

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WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service today warned taxpayers about groups masquerading as charitable organizations to attract donations from unsuspecting contributors, one of the "Dirty Dozen" for the 2016 filing season.

"Fake charities set up by scam artists to steal your money or personal information are a recurring problem," said IRS Commissioner John Koskinen. "Taxpayers should take the time to research organizations before giving their hard-earned money."

Compiled annually, the "Dirty Dozen" lists a variety of common scams that taxpayers may encounter anytime, but many of these schemes peak during filing season as people prepare their returns or hire someone to prepare their taxes.

Perpetrators of illegal scams can face significant penalties and interest and possible criminal prosecution. IRS Criminal Investigation works closely with the Department of Justice to shut down scams and prosecute the

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criminals behind them.

The IRS offers these basic tips to taxpayers making charitable donations:

- Be wary of charities with names that are similar to familiar or nationally known organizations. Some phony charities use names or websites that sound or look like those of respected, legitimate organizations. IRS.gov has a search feature, Exempt Organizations [Select Check](#), which allows people to find legitimate, qualified charities to which donations may be tax-deductible. Legitimate charities will provide their Employer Identification Numbers (EIN), if requested, which can be used to verify their legitimacy through EO Select Check. It is advisable to double check using a charity's EIN.
- Don't give out personal financial information, such as Social Security numbers or passwords to anyone who solicits a contribution from you. Scam artists may use this information to steal your identity and money. People use credit card numbers to make legitimate donations but please be very careful when you are speaking with someone who has called you and you have not yet confirmed they are calling from a legitimate charity.
- Don't give or send cash. For security and tax record purposes, contribute by check or credit card or another way that provides documentation of the gift.

Impersonation of Charitable Organizations Another long-standing type of abuse or fraud involves scams that occur in the wake of significant natural disasters.

Following major disasters, it's common for scam artists to impersonate charities to get money or private information from well-intentioned taxpayers. Scam artists can use a variety of tactics. Some scammers operating bogus charities may contact people by telephone or email to solicit money or financial information. They may even directly contact disaster victims and claim to be working for or on behalf of the IRS to help the victims file casualty loss claims and get tax refunds.

They may attempt to get personal financial information or Social Security numbers that can be used to steal the victims' identities or financial resources. Bogus websites may solicit funds for disaster victims.

To help disaster victims, the IRS encourages taxpayers to donate to recognized charities. If you are a disaster victim call the IRS toll-free disaster assistance telephone number (1-866-562-5227) if you have questions about tax relief or disaster related tax issues.

And don't forget to find legitimate and qualified charities with [Select Check](#) search tool on IRS.gov. (EINs are frequently called federal tax identification numbers, which is the same as an EIN when using Select Check.)

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