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IRS Security Awareness Tax Tip Number 9: IRS, States and Tax Industry Deploy New Safeguards for 2016

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) sent this bulletin at 01/19/2016 10:44 AM EST

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**Issue Number: Awareness Tax Tip Number 9
Inside This Issue**

IRS, States and Tax Industry Deploy New Safeguards for 2016

Because of improved protections in recent years, the Internal Revenue Service stops the vast majority of fraudulent tax returns using stolen identities. But identity thieves and criminal syndicates continue to persist and evolve.

As the threat has changed, so has the IRS. In a new era of cooperation, the IRS, the states and the entire tax industry came together to identify what additional steps could be taken to better fight identity theft and better protect the taxpayers.

Starting in January 2016, this renewed effort will make for a safer, more secure filing season for taxpayers.

Many changes will be invisible, but they are critical to making sure the IRS can verify the taxpayer and the legitimacy of the tax return before it ever enters into the tax processing system. More than 20 shared data elements will help the software industry and the IRS stop fraudulent returns at the door.

For example, the IRS will receive information from software providers about the duration of time it took to create the return. This will help identify the computer-generated tax returns that are fraudulent and filed in bulk.

The IRS, states and tax industry will share details of any

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fraudulent schemes they see on a frequent basis so everyone will have the same information and adjust accordingly to provide increased protection to taxpayers.

The most publicly visible aspect of these partnership efforts will be for those taxpayers who prepare their own tax returns using tax software or online products. There will be new procedures that will help prevent fraudsters from taking over the accounts of taxpayers. These include:

- New password standards to access tax software will require a minimum of 8 characters with upper case, lower case, alpha, numerical and special characters.
- A new timed lockout feature and limited unsuccessful log-in attempts.
- The addition of three security questions.

Out-of-band verification for email addresses, which is sending an email or text to the customer with a PIN – a common practice used throughout the financial sector.

The IRS also has teamed up with state revenue departments and the tax industry to make sure you understand the dangers to your personal and financial data. Taxes. Security. Together. Working in partnership with you, we can make a difference.

It's important that everyone take steps to protect their personal and financial data online and at home. Computer users should always use security software that includes firewall and anti-virus protections. Sensitive information such as tax records should be encrypted if stored on your computer or secured by lock and key if on paper.

To learn additional steps you can take to protect your personal and financial data, visit Taxes. Security. Together. You also can read Publication 4524, Security Awareness for Taxpayers.

Each and every taxpayer has a set of fundamental rights they should be aware of when dealing with the IRS. These are your Taxpayer Bill of Rights. Explore your rights and our obligations to protect them on IRS.gov.

Additional IRS Resources:

- IRS Commissioner Koskinen's Statement on the Security Summit Group Public Awareness Campaign
- www.irs.gov/identitytheft – Identity Protection: Prevention, Detection and Victim Assistance
- IR-2015-129, IRS, States and Tax Industry Announce New Steps to Help Public to Protect Personal Tax Data
- Fact Sheet 2015-23, IRS, States and Industry Partners Provide Update on Collaborative Fight Against Tax-Related Identity Theft

- [IRS and Partner Statements on the October 2015 Security Summit Meeting](#)

IRS YouTube Video:
- *Taxes. Security. Together.* – [English](#)
- *Security Summit: Identity Theft Tips Overview* – [English](#)
- *Security Summit: Changes for 2016* – [English](#)
- *Security Summit: Check Your Credit Report Annually* – [English](#)
- *Security Summit: Secure Your Tax Return* – [English](#)
- *Security Summit: Be Cautious When Using Wi-Fi* – [English](#)
- *Security Summit: Update Your Passwords Regularly* – [English](#)

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