

Taxpayers Urged to Watch for Phone Scams and Phishing Schemes

LANSING, Mich. – As the state of Michigan begins a new year and the state income tax filing season approaches, the Michigan Department of Treasury is asking taxpayers to resolve to be ready for tax scams in 2018.

Cybercriminals typically increase their activity in the first part of the year through phone scams and email phishing schemes. These scammers try to obtain personal information using different tricks and tactics so they can file income tax returns and claim refunds on behalf of unsuspecting taxpayers. Some scammers may also allege a taxpayer owes taxes and aggressively demand payment for a quick payout.

“Taxpayers need to be extra alert for possible scams and schemes during this time of year and throughout the income tax filing season,” said Deputy State Treasurer Glenn White, head of Treasury’s Tax Administration Group. “When taxpayers proactively look for scams, they are less likely to be a victim of a tax-related identity theft and other cybercriminal activities.”

Treasury will never:

- Initiate a phone call or email to ask for personal information.
- Call or email to demand immediate payment using a specific payment method, such as a prepaid debit card, gift card or wire transfer. Generally, Treasury will first send a bill through the U.S. mail to any taxpayer who owes taxes.
- Threaten to immediately bring in local police or other law-enforcement groups to have the taxpayer arrested for not paying.
- Demand that taxes be paid without giving the taxpayer the opportunity to question or appeal the amount owed.
- Ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.

Cybercriminals often alter caller ID numbers and emails to make it look like the state Treasury Department, the Internal Revenue Service or another official agency is contacting a taxpayer. Scammers may use employee titles, a person’s name, address and other personal information to sound official.

Taxpayers who are contacted by a scammer should immediately cease the call or delete the email.

In 2017, the state Treasury Department’s increased security measures protected more than 4,000 taxpayers who confirmed their identity was stolen and used to request state of Michigan income tax refunds. This prevented more than \$16 million from being distributed to scammers.

Taxpayers who have received a call or email from a scammer should report the case to the IRS [through the web](#) or by calling 800-366-4484. To learn more about tax-related identity theft, go to www.michigan.gov/identitytheft.