

IRS Warns Taxpayers of Summer Surge in Automated Phone Scam Calls; Requests for Fake Tax Payments Using iTunes Gift Cards

IR-2016-99, August 2, 2016

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service today warned taxpayers to stay vigilant against an increase of IRS impersonation scams in the form of automated calls and new tactics from scammers demanding tax payments on iTunes and other gift cards.

The IRS has seen an increase in “robo-calls” where scammers leave urgent callback requests through the phone telling taxpayers to call back to settle their “tax bill.” These fake calls generally claim to be the last warning before legal action is taken. Once the victim calls back, the scammers may threaten to arrest, deport or revoke the driver’s license of the victim if they don’t agree to pay.

“It used to be that most of these bogus calls would come from a live-person. Scammers are evolving and using more and more automated calls in an effort to reach the largest number of victims possible,” said IRS Commissioner John Koskinen. “Taxpayers should remain alert for this summer surge of phone scams, and watch for clear warning signs as these scammers change tactics.”

In the latest trend, IRS impersonators are demanding payments on iTunes and other gift cards. The IRS reminds taxpayers that any request to settle a tax bill by putting money on any form of gift card is a clear indication of a scam.

Some examples of the varied tactics seen this year are:

- Demanding payment for a “Federal Student Tax.” See [IR-2016-81](#).
- Demanding immediate tax payment for taxes owed on an iTunes or other type of gift card
- Soliciting W-2 information from payroll and human resources professionals. See [IR-2016-34](#).
- “Verifying” tax return information over the phone. See [IR-2016-40](#).
- Pretending to be from the tax preparation industry. See [IR-2016-28](#)

Since these bogus calls can take many forms and scammers are constantly changing their strategies, knowing the telltale signs is the best way to avoid becoming a victim.

The IRS will never:

- Call to demand immediate payment over the phone, nor will the agency call about taxes owed without first having mailed you a bill.
- Threaten to immediately bring in local police or other law-enforcement groups to have you arrested for not paying.
- Demand that you pay taxes without giving you the opportunity to question or appeal the amount they say you owe.
- Require you to use a specific payment method for your taxes, such as a prepaid debit card, gift card or wire transfer.
- Ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.

If you get a phone call from someone claiming to be from the IRS and asking for money and you don’t owe taxes, here’s what you should do:

- Do not give out any information. Hang up immediately.
- Contact TIGTA to report the call. Use their “[IRS Impersonation Scam Reporting](#)” web page or call 800-366-4484.
- Report it to the Federal Trade Commission. Use the “[FTC Complaint Assistant](#)” on FTC.gov. Please add “IRS Telephone Scam” in the notes.
- If you think you might owe taxes, call the IRS directly at 800-829-1040