

Houston Police Department Warning

Telephone Scam

There are many types of scams that citizens should be aware of in today's society. Most are variations of the same scam, but the fact remains these scams can easily strike fear into the hearts of unsuspecting and law abiding citizens. The "IRS" scam is being seen more regularly across the city and particularly in the Kingwood community.

In the "IRS" scam, an individual will receive a telephone call from someone who states that they are from the "IRS" or even the SSA (Social Security Administration). The initial caller will leave a name and will not hesitate to leave a voicemail. The message oftentimes says "Call the SSA immediately for a legal matter and do NOT ignore this message". Or "This is regarding a legal allegation. Do not disregard".

Most people are alarmed and will call back immediately. When the citizen calls the number, the individual answering the telephone, the suspect, will ask for identifying information and the victim's cell phone number. The suspect will then tell the victim that he or she owes a large amount of money to the "IRS" and may talk about payments or discuss an amount that will keep the victim out of jail. The suspect tells the victim that the call will be terminated and the victim will receive a call on their cell phone. When the suspect then calls the victim, the victim's caller ID will show that the call is coming from the local IRS office. The suspect will begin instructing the victim to go to the bank and withdraw a large amount of money. The victim will be instructed to purchase a money order and usually told to go to a Western Union and wire the money to a particular account number.

The suspect will use many intimidation tactics to keep the victim on the phone and to agree to send money. The suspect will even threaten a warrant for victim's arrest will be issued. If the call is terminated for whatever reason, the suspects will call back and try to intimidate the victim by identifying themselves as the police. The caller id will even identify the suspect's number as the local police department telephone number.

This scam is not localized to the Houston Area.

To avoid becoming a victim of this scam, be aware of the following:

- If you do not recognize the incoming telephone number, don't answer the call.
- Remember that the IRS or the SSA will not contact you initially by telephone. If they need to contact you they will make attempts by mail.
- Any call where the caller is instructing you to go to the bank and withdraw money is almost certainly a scam.
- A caller who tries to keep you on the telephone is an indicator that the call is part of a scam.

- In this day of telephone lines through computers, (voice over IP) the caller ID can be made to say anything the caller wants it to say.
- Scammers may be able to recite the last four digits of a victim's Social Security Number.
- Scammers sometimes send bogus IRS emails to some victims to support their bogus calls.
- Victims often hear background noise of other calls being conducted to mimic a call site.
- After threatening victims with jail time or driver's license revocation, scammers hang up and others soon call back pretending to be from the local police or DMV, and the caller ID supports their claim.

What do I do if I get one of these calls?

- If there is any doubt in your mind that it is a scam, call the police.
- If you are on your way to withdraw money from your financial institution and you're afraid to hang up the telephone, have a teller call the police.
- If you know you owe taxes or you think you might owe taxes, call the IRS at 1.800.829.1040. The IRS employees at that line can help you with a payment issue - if there really is such an issue.
- If you know you don't owe taxes or have no reason to think that you owe any taxes (for example, you've never received a bill or the caller made some bogus threats as described above), then call and report the incident to the [Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration](#) at 1.800.366.4484.
- You can file a complaint using the [FTC Complaint Assistant](#); choose "Other" and then "Imposter Scams." If the complaint involves someone impersonating the IRS, include the words "IRS Telephone Scam" in the notes.

Taxpayers should be aware that there are other unrelated scams (such as a lottery sweepstakes) and solicitations (such as debt relief) that fraudulently claim to be from the IRS.

The IRS encourages taxpayers to be vigilant against phone and email scams that use the IRS as a lure. The IRS does not initiate contact with taxpayers by email to request personal or financial information. This includes any type of electronic communication, such as text messages and social media channels. The IRS also does not ask for PINs, passwords or similar confidential access information for credit card, bank or other financial accounts. Recipients should not open any attachments or click on any links contained in the message. Instead, forward the e-mail to phishing@irs.gov