



# It Is Tax Time: Protect Your Identity

Tax season is here. It is time to get your files and forms in order. You may be well-versed in W-2's and 1099's, but do you know that an identity thief could possibly get to your tax refund before you can file for it?

Tax-related ID theft generally happens in two ways; both involving your Social Security Number (SSN). If someone uses your SSN to get a job, the employer reports that person's income to the IRS using your SSN. When you file your tax return you do not include those earnings. The IRS does not know those wages were reported by an employer you do not know; the agency would send you a letter saying you did not report the income.

Sometimes an identity thief uses your SSN to file for, and get, your tax refund before you file. Then, when you go to file your return, IRS records show the first filing and the refund. You will get a notice or letter from the IRS saying more than one return was filed for you.

If this happens to you or if the IRS sends you any notice or letter indicating a problem, contact them immediately. Visit the IRS online at [irs.gov](http://irs.gov) or call (800) 908-4490. Specialists will help you get your tax return filed, get you any refund you may be due, and protect your IRS account from identity thieves in the future. You should also contact your state's tax agency to report possible identity theft. In Wisconsin the Department of Revenue can be reached by calling (608) 266-2772.

One additional point: the IRS never starts contact with a taxpayer using email, text, or social media that asks for personal or financial information. If you get an email that claims to be from the IRS do not reply or click on any links; instead forward it to [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov).

If someone else obtained your SSN, apply for an Identity Protection PIN (IP PIN) from the IRS. This is a six-digit number that prevents someone else from filing a tax return using your Social Security number. The IP PIN is known only to you and the IRS and helps verify your identity when you file your electronic or paper tax return. Apply at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).



File your taxes as early as possible so you file before an identity thief does. You also may want to have your SSN flagged by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue by calling (608) 266-2772. Once your SSN has been flagged, your identity will need to be verified before a Wisconsin tax return will be sent out, preventing an identity thief from receiving your tax return. Identity verification may delay the receipt of your Wisconsin tax return. In order to determine if someone else's income is being reported under your SSN, you can go to the Social Security Administration website at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) and set up a "my Social Security" account so you can monitor your earnings and wages reported under your SSN.

## **Tax preparers and personal privacy**

Know the company or individual that will be preparing your tax return. Investigate with the Better Business Bureau, especially if they are new or appear to provide seasonal services. Contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection Hotline at (800) 422-7128, to find out if there are any complaints against them if you are not sure. Ask the business how your information will be handled and stored, what computer security is used, and if the person working on your taxes has undergone a thorough background screening. Trust your instincts, if you feel uncomfortable or doubt the company's

commitment to protecting your privacy, take your business to a company you can trust.

## Watch out for tax time scams

If you receive an email asking for your Social Security Number or other personal information, delete it or forward it to the Federal Trade Commission at [spam@uce.gov](mailto:spam@uce.gov) and [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov) for investigation. The IRS does not send emails asking for information or to inform you of anything. Likewise, banks do not request personal information by sending you an email or calling you on the telephone. If you have not initiated contact, then do not give out personal information to anyone.

## Employment identity

Make a habit of comparing your W-2 wage earning statement you receive from your employer with the Social Security Administration (SSA) statement you may obtain from their website to be sure the amounts match exactly. If the amounts do not match it may indicate someone is working in your name or it can indicate an error in reporting. Either way, contact the Social Security Administration at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) to report any discrepancies.

## Your mailbox

Use a mailbox that locks or consider having your mail sent to a Post Office Box. Try to retrieve your mail daily. Uncollected mail is an invitation for identity thieves. Sign up for USPS informed delivery to see a preview of your incoming mail each day: [www.informedelivery.USPS.com](http://www.informedelivery.USPS.com). Deposit your mail in an official mailbox preferably inside the Post Office. Never leave outgoing mail in your personal mailbox or mailboxes at work.

## Address changes

If you have moved within the tax year, notify any payers of your new address. Do not rely solely on the Postal Service change of address process to notify everyone you may expect tax documents from.

## Paper security

Keep tax paperwork in a safe, locked location. When you must travel with them, place them out of sight like in the trunk of your car until you can deliver them safely to your tax preparer or to your home for safe storage.

## Shred, shred, shred

Place papers you no longer need that contain personal information such as social security numbers, account numbers, etc., through a micro-cut shredder.

## Your computer

If you are using your computer to file or store your tax return, be sure it is protected with up-to-date antivirus, firewall and spy-ware software to protect you from invasion. Be sure to update these security programs daily for the greatest protection. Do not allow remote access to your computer unless you can be sure it is not an imposter.

*For more information or to file a complaint, visit our website or contact:*

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture,  
Trade and Consumer Protection  
*Bureau of Consumer Protection*  
2811 Agriculture Drive, PO Box 8911  
Madison, WI 53718-8911

Email: [DATCPHotline@wi.gov](mailto:DATCPHotline@wi.gov)

Website: [datcp.wi.gov](http://datcp.wi.gov)

PHONE: (800) 422-7128      TTY: (608) 224-5058

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