



Department of
Taxation

FACT SHEET: Stopping I.D. Theft from Paying Off

Taxpayers can help by protecting their own personal identification information

Ohio is Part of a National Trend

State tax officials in Ohio and across the country are reporting a significant increase in attempted I.D. theft by criminals trying to steal the public's money by filing thousands of fraudulent tax refund claims, often using stolen social security numbers. The Ohio Department of Taxation (ODT) has intercepted more than \$250 million of fraudulent refund claims this year.

Protecting Ohioans and Ohio

Tax Commissioner Joe Testa is urging all Ohioans to be as vigilant as possible about guarding their social security numbers. He says the information used to try to steal refunds may also be used to harm an individual in other ways. Testa is also advising Ohio taxpayers that if they receive a letter from ODT notifying them about issues with their refund request, or an error message when filing a return electronically, to promptly respond to the instructions listed. If a resident becomes aware that they are the victim of identification theft, they are encouraged to file a report with their local police department. Additional information on combatting or minimizing the damage from I.D. theft is available elsewhere on this site: **Tax.ohio.gov**

The Scheme

Would-be thieves are using real names and real Social Security numbers, often of deceased individuals, and filing tax returns with fabricated financial information. One criminal may file dozens or even hundreds of returns, sometimes for exorbitant amounts of money, hoping one or more will slip through. Ninety percent of illegal claims are made on electronically filed returns.

This surge of fraud is coming from criminals across the world. It's a problem that has increasingly plagued the IRS, and is now spreading to states that have an income tax.

Fighting I.D. Theft and Tax Fraud

The Ohio Department of Taxation has tests built into its computer systems to detect and prevent fraud, and uses information from fraudulent returns to constantly adjust those defenses to adapt to changing methods of fraud. ODT has also assigned additional tax agents to its suspicious filers' unit to focus exclusively on intercepting illegal returns. ODT, in partnership with the Ohio Department of Public Safety, is exploring all possible options to aggressively fight I.D. theft and tax fraud.

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