



SAFE | Security Awareness for Everyone

TIPSHEET - FEBRUARY 2025

Essential Cybersecurity Tips for Tax Season

It's tax season, and thousands of people lose millions of dollars and their personal information to tax scams every year. Cybercriminals commonly impersonate the IRS, tax preparers, and financial institutions. Be highly alert for phishing emails, scammy phone calls, and fake websites designed to steal your personal information. But it's hard to know what to look for when you only do this once a year.

So, we have gathered some essential information and tips to stay more secure and protect your personal and financial information.

As always, before you begin:

- Update your Software so all internet-connected devices are running the most current versions.
- Update your Passwords.

Secure your return with an IRS IP PIN:

Consider applying for an **Identity Protection PIN (IP PIN)** on the IRS website. This six-digit code prevents unauthorized tax filings using your Social Security number.

Enable Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA):

Use **MFA** on all accounts related to your taxes, including your IRS account, tax preparation software, and any account with a financial institution, like your bank.

Watch out for Phishing:

- **Scammers use phishing in all its forms**, such as email, phone calls, text messages, and regular mail, to trick us into giving up our information and stealing our money.
- **Unsolicited IRS communications:** The IRS never initiates email, text, or social media contact. Even if it looks official (and scary) – it's not them!

- **Urgency and threats:** Scammers use scare tactics, like threats of arrest or financial penalties, to pressure you into immediate action with no time to think.
- **Requests for sensitive data:** Don't respond to emails or calls asking for your Social Security number, banking details, or login credentials. The IRS and financial institutions don't use these methods to transmit sensitive data because they are not secure.

Best of all, resist the pressure to act immediately! Take your time; *think before you act*.

Back up your tax records.

Make digital and physical backups of your tax documents and store them securely.

By staying calm but vigilant and following these tax time tips, you can protect your identity, secure your tax return, and reduce the risk of fraud. Don't let cybercriminals make tax season more stressful than it already is! Stay safe online and file with confidence!