FLORIDA CONSUMER eNEWSLETTER
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BEWARE OF TAX SCAMS

Tax season is here, and so are the scams. If someone calls you claiming to be an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) agent and insists that you send money immediately, hang up. This is one of the largest telephone fraud scams of IRS impersonators targeting innocent taxpayers. According to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, the IRS recent impersonation phone scam has claimed nearly 3,000 victims, who have together lost more than $14 million.

Many individuals have received aggressive and threatening calls from individuals claiming to be employees of the IRS. These scammers can sound convincing when they call. They use fake names and bogus IRS identification badge numbers. Scammers can even spoof the IRS toll-free number on your caller ID to make it appear legitimate. The caller informs the intended victims that they owe taxes and must pay using a prepaid debit card or wire transfer. They often threaten the victim with arrest, deportation or suspension of a business or driver's license. The caller may even claim to know the last four digits of your Social Security number and provide you with follow up emails claiming to be from the IRS. Once the scammers have made their threats, they are known to call the victims back from a different number, claiming to be an officer with the police department. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services encourages taxpayers to be alert for phone and email scams that use the IRS name for fraudulent purposes.

KEEP IN MIND, THE IRS WILL NEVER:

- Call to demand immediate payment, nor will the agency call about taxes owed without first having mailed you a bill.
- Demand that you pay taxes without providing you with the opportunity to question or appeal the amount they claim you owe.
- Request your credit or debit card numbers over the phone.
- Threaten to issue a warrant for your arrest due to non-payment.

Remember, the IRS does not use email, text messages or any social media to discuss your personal tax issue involving bills or refunds. If you believe you owe current or back taxes, contact the IRS directly by calling 1-800-829-1040. The IRS workers can assist you with payment concerns.

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is the state's clearinghouse for consumer complaints, protection and information. Consumers who believe fraud has taken place can contact the department's consumer assistance center by calling 1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352) within Florida, 1-800-FL-AYUDA (352-9832) en Español or (850) 410-3800 from outside of Florida or visit www.800helpfla.com.

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