



Tax-related identity theft occurs when someone uses your stolen Social Security number to file a tax return. You may not even know you're at risk until it's too late.

# Tax-related identity theft

How to avoid it and what to do if it happens to you

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# Tax-related identity theft is a national crisis; but there are steps you can take to protect yourself and your family.

## Monitor your personal information.

- Regularly check your bank and credit card statements.
- Order your free annual credit report.

## Beware of impersonators.

- Do not provide personal information to callers you do not know.

## Avoid phishing scams.

- Don't open attachments or click on links unless you know the sender.
- The IRS never initiates contact by email, text message or through social media.
- The IRS does not demand that you use a specific payment method, such as a prepaid debit card, gift card or wire transfer.
- The IRS will not ask for your debit or credit card numbers over the phone. If you owe taxes, make payments to the United States Treasury or review [IRS.gov/payments](https://www.irs.gov/payments) for IRS online options.

## Keep your computer secure.

- Use current versions of antivirus, malware protection and firewalls and keep them updated.
- Use strong passwords, change them frequently and do not share them.

## Be careful about what you post.

- Do not post personal or family data on social media.
- Stranger danger! Only accept friend requests from people you know.

## Be aware of cybersecurity.

- No sensitive tax or personal information should be sent via unsecured email.
- Use secure portals and encrypted emails.

## Protect your private personal information.

- Shred any documents that have personal information before throwing them away.
- Be very selective when sharing your Social Security number.

## So, you're a victim of identity theft? What now?

- Contact your CPA.
- Report identity theft to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at [IdentityTheft.gov](https://www.IdentityTheft.gov).
- Contact a major credit bureau to place a fraud alert on your records.
- Close any accounts you didn't open.
- Respond to all IRS notices.
- Continue to pay your taxes and file your tax return.

The unfortunate reality is that personal data is already at risk everywhere. But your CPA can help. They can get you back on track should identity theft occur.

## 2018 by the numbers

2.99 million

Identity theft and fraud complaints filed (Source: FTC)

\$1.48 billion

Lost to fraud (Source: FTC)

446 million

Records exposed in data breaches in 2018 (Source: ID Theft Resource Center)