



City of Parma

Law Department

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – January 13, 2016

Parma Law Director Tim Dobeck has issued the following advisory warning.

Taxpayers are the Target of an Aggressive and Sophisticated Phone Scam

Con artists impersonating IRS agents are calling people nationwide and demanding immediate payment of alleged overdue taxes. They prey on the most vulnerable members of society, such as the elderly, newly arrived immigrants and those whose first language is not English. Their preferred method of payment is either pre-loaded debit cards or wire transfer. If the victim refuses to cooperate, they are threatened with arrest, deportation, liens on property, or the suspension of a business or driver's license. The caller often becomes hostile or insulting. If the call isn't answered, the caller often leaves an "urgent" callback request.

In a variation of this scam, a fake IRS agent tells the victim they have a tax refund due to trick the victim into sharing personal and financial information. This type of scam is known as phishing.

Since October 2013, the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) has received reports of roughly 736,000 such fraudulent phone calls. TIGTA is aware of approximately 4,550 victims who have collectively paid over \$23 million as a result of the scam. In July 2015, the leader of an extortion ring run through various "call centers" located in India was sentenced to 175 months in federal prison and \$1 million in forfeiture for his role in a massive impersonation scheme. Despite damaging this criminal enterprise, the IRS and law enforcement agencies across our nation have seen a surge of phone scams in recent months.

These con artists are successful because they sound convincing, using common names and bogus IRS identification badge numbers to identify themselves. Call centers located abroad often hire English-speaking employees to place phone calls to U.S. taxpayers. Scammers may have knowledge of private information, such as the last four digits of the victim's Social Security Number. Other characteristics of this scam include:

- Calls are often made by an automated robocall machine.
- The IRS toll-free number is spoofed on the caller ID to make it look like the IRS is calling.
- Scammers may send bogus IRS emails to support their scam.
- Victims hear background noise of other calls being conducted to mimic a call site.
- After the initial call, co-conspirators call victim pretending to be local police or DMV, and the caller ID supports their claim.

You should know that the IRS will never: 1) initiate contact with taxpayers by phone or email to demand immediate payment or about taxes owed without first mailing a bill; 2) demand payment of taxes without giving the opportunity to question or appeal the amount owed; 3) require a specific payment method; 4) ask by phone or other electronic communication for private information, such as credit or debit card numbers, PINS, or passwords to bank accounts; or 5) threaten to involve local police or other law enforcement groups to arrest you for not paying.

If you receive a suspicious phone call from someone claiming to be from the IRS, you should record the caller's name, badge number, callback number and caller ID if available. Then call and report the incident to TIGTA at 800.366.4484 or at www.tigta.gov and clicking on the IRS Impersonation Scam Reporting tab in the upper right corner. You may also report the incident to the IRS at phishing@irs.gov and to the Parma Police Department at their non-emergency number 440.885.1234.