



GARY R. HERBERT
Governor

SPENCER J. COX
Lieutenant Governor

State of Utah Department of Commerce

FRANCINE A. GIANI
Executive Director

THOMAS A. BRADY
Deputy Director

DANIEL O'BANNON
Director, Division of Consumer Protection

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MEDIA ALERT

"Phony Internal Revenue Service phone calls continue to harass Utahns demanding money, account information with threats of jail time and fines"

"Treasury Inspector General of the Tax Administrator reports Utah residents have lost \$28,000 to IRS impersonation phone calls as of August 18, 2014 and calls continue to circle the state"

(For immediate release...)

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah - Francine A. Giani, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Commerce, announced today that the Division of Consumer Protection continues to receive reports from Utah citizens called by con artists claiming to be Internal Revenue Service (IRS) representatives who are demanding payments with threats of jail time, fines and other punishments if their requests aren't met right away. Some callers have claimed the Utah consumer has an IRS refund coming to them in order to gain personal bank account information. According to the Internal Revenue Service, Spanish speaking residents have been threatened with deportation as well. Whatever the phony phone call scenario, the IRS states their agency would never contact a citizen via phone involving a personal tax matter without first sending out official written correspondence.

"Don't fall for these phony phone calls! Fake IRS con artists will continue to circle the state trying to find someone who will take the bait. Remember an educated consumer is a scam artists' worst nightmare," stated Francine A. Giani.

The IRS scam even reached the home of Utah Senator Curtis S. Bramble (R-District 16) whose wife received repeated threats from a bogus caller who claimed they owed thousands of dollars in back taxes.

"As a Certified Public Accountant who knows every dime that goes in and out of our accounts, my antenna immediately went up when my wife Susan alerted me to the telephone message. She described the caller as verbally abusive and very convincing so we were concerned others might be conned into sending money that isn't owed at all," reported Senator Bramble.

As of August 18, 2014, Utah residents reported \$28,000 in losses due to IRS impersonation phone calls according to the Treasury Inspector General of the Tax Administrator. California residents reported the most losses at approximately \$1 Million dollars, followed by New York and Florida.

Tips for Consumers: 5 IRS Phony Phone Call Red Flags

Below are 5 red flags to be aware of; actions that the Internal Revenue Service would never employ when contacting a citizen about their taxes;

1. Call you regarding owed taxes without first mailing you an official notice.
2. Demand that you pay taxes without giving you the opportunity to question or appeal the amount the IRS claims you owe.
3. Require you to use a specific payment method for your taxes, such as a prepaid debit card or send money via wire transfer.
4. Ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.
5. Threaten to bring in local police or other law-enforcement groups to have you arrested for not paying.

What to do if you get a Phony IRS phone call

If you receive a phone call from someone claiming to be from the IRS and asking for money, here are steps you can take:

- If you know you owe taxes or think you might owe, call the IRS at 1.800.829.1040. IRS workers can help you with a payment issue.
- If you know you don't owe taxes or have no reason to believe that you do, report the incident to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) at 1.800.366.4484 or at www.tigta.gov.
- You can file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at www.ftc.gov . If the complaint involves someone impersonating the IRS; include the words "IRS Telephone Scam" in the notes.

In addition, the Internal Revenue Service reminds the public that their employees do not use unsolicited emails, text messages or any social media to discuss personal tax issues. For more information on reporting tax scams, go to www.irs.gov and type "scam" in the search box. For more information about the Utah Division of Consumer Protection log on to; www.consumerprotection.utah.gov

For media enquiries contact:

Jennifer Bolton

Public Information Officer

Utah Department of Commerce

(801) 530-6646 office

(801) 652-8322 cell

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