IRS Warning of New Tax Refund Scam

July 6, 2023 - The IRS is warning Americans of a new tax scam that promises people a refund on their 2019 taxes. This particular scam has been particularly effective as it arrives via snail mail in an envelope that appears to come directly from the IRS and the contents of that envelope claim to be time sensitive.

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The IRS is still holding $1.5 Billion in unclaimed tax refunds for the 2019 tax year. But if you are owed any of that money, you only have until July 17th to claim it. After that, the money becomes the property of the US government.

Scammers have latched onto this and have been sending out letters via snail mail to unwitting taxpayers. The letters, which are on IRS letterhead but with a fake address and phone number, inform them that the IRS believes it owes them money but at this point they only have a few days to claim it. The letters then ask the recipient to provide a variety of information; including bank account and routing numbers, account types and social security numbers.

Anyone falling for the scam is likely to see their bank accounts drained of money and new lines of credit opened in their name. The information that is being asked for is more than enough to commit identity theft.

Consumers need to know that the IRS will never contact you and ask for your personal information. They already have that information on file. Anyone who receives such a letter should throw it out. If you have questions about it and think it may be legitimate, look up the IRS's phone number yourself (don't use the one included on the letter) and call them.

Anyone who has already fallen for this scam should contact their bank immediately and have their accounts changed. Additionally, they should place either a fraud alert or a credit freeze on their credit files by contacting the credit reporting agencies (Experian, Equifax and TransUnion). A credit freeze is actually the only way to ensure that new lines of credit are not opened in your name.
by Jim Malmberg
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