

QuickTips

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Your Technology Team

Keep Your Identity Safe While Filing Taxes Online

It's that wonderful time of the year again when everybody whips out their green eyeshades and calculators and figures out how much they owe the IRS — or how much the IRS owes them. The large (and growing) number of people filing their taxes online presents a very attractive target to online identity thieves. Here's how to make sure you don't get suckered into giving up your personal information.

1. Don't click on emails promising refunds or threatening audits.

In a popular email scam, crooks send out spam with subject lines like "COLLECT YOUR REFUND NOW." Sometimes the emails even come from legitimate-looking addresses, and have logos or signature files that make them appear to come from a real government entity. The victim is asked to click through to an application form that the scammer then uses to harvest personal information. A newer twist on the old refund scam is the audit scam, where a taxpayer gets a personalized email preying on their fears of an audit. Because the email is personalized, the recipient is more likely to think it's legitimate. It isn't. The IRS states very clearly that it does not send out unsolicited email communications to private citizens.

2. Be smart about where and when you file.

Do not file your taxes from an Internet café. Even if you're on your own computer, many publicly available wireless networks are vulnerable to intrusion because they aren't encrypted. Additionally, crooks have been known to set up public wireless networks with names that sound like legitimate hosts in order to lure people into using them. Be safe and file your taxes from a secure, encrypted connection.

3. Protect the data on your hard drive.

And last, chances are you might have some of your important tax information stored on your computer in Quicken files, Excel spreadsheets, or other formats. Make sure your firewall, anti-virus, and anti-spyware programs are all up to date to prevent intrusions that could result in this information being accessed and stolen.

Just a few simple measures will keep your identity safe! Contact CMIT Solutions to find out more about our anti-virus and anti-spam products.

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