

# Identity Theft

## What?

Identity theft happens when someone uses your personal information without your permission. The IRS is having increasing problems with stolen Social Security numbers. An estimated 4 to 5 million taxpayers are currently affected.



## How does it happen?

Most commonly, the identity thief steals your Social Security number and files for a tax refund early in the season. When you go to file your taxes, you receive a notice that you have already filed.

## How to prevent identity theft:

- Do not answer any emails from the IRS. **The IRS does not send emails or text messages.** If you receive suspicious IRS emails report them to the IRS at [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov).
- Do not carry your Social Security number with you. Keep it in a secure location.
- Protect your computers with firewalls and anti-spam software.
- Change passwords for internet accounts.
- Do not give personal information on the phone or through email unless you are absolutely sure who you are giving it to.
- Shred all documents containing personal information.
- Check your credit report annually.

## What if it happens to you?

- If the IRS sends you a notice, respond immediately. Follow the instructions on the notice.
- File an Identity Theft Affidavit (IRS Form 14039).
- Call the IRS Identity Theft Specialized Unit at 1-800-908-4490.
- If your purse or wallet containing personal information is stolen, contact all credit cards to cancel.
- Contact the credit bureaus about a fraud alert at the following numbers:
  - Equifax: 1-800-525-6285
  - Experian: 1-888-397-3742
  - Trans Union: 1-800-680-7289
- If your Social Security number has been stolen, notify the Social Security office of Inspector General at 1-800-269-0271.
- The Federal Trade Commission has a toll-free Identification Theft helpline at 1-877-438-4338.