

# FRANZEN & FRANZEN, LLP

## CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

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### May 7, 2014 – IRS Reiterates Warning of Pervasive Telephone Scam

On April 15, 2014, the IRS issued another strong warning for consumers to guard against sophisticated and aggressive phone scams targeting taxpayers, including recent immigrants, as reported incidents of this crime continue to rise nationwide. As these scams are not likely to end with the filing season, the IRS urges everyone to remain on guard.

Individuals have reported a particularly aggressive phone scam in the last several months. Potential victims are threatened with deportation, arrest, having their utilities shut off, or having their driver's licenses revoked. Callers are frequently insulting or hostile, apparently attempting to scare the potential victims. Potential victims also may be told they are entitled to big refunds, or that they owe money that must be paid immediately to the IRS. When unsuccessful the first time, the phone scammers sometimes call back trying a new strategy.

Other characteristics of this scam include:

- The use of fake names and IRS badge numbers;
- Using common names and surnames to identify themselves;
- Using the last four digits of a victim's Social Security number;
- Spoofing the IRS toll-free number on caller ID to make it appear that the IRS is calling;
- Sending bogus IRS emails to some victims to support the bogus calls; and
- Background noise of other calls being conducted to mimic a call site.

After threatening victims, the scammers hang up but others soon call back pretending to be from the local police or DMV and the caller ID supports the claim.

Anyone receiving a call like the one described should hang up immediately. If you know or think you owe taxes call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040. The IRS employees at that line can help with any payment issue. If you know you do not owe taxes or have no reason to think that you owe any taxes (for example, you have never received a bill), then report the incident to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration by calling 1-800-366-4484 or online at IRS Impersonation Scam Reporting.

Anyone who receives a call like the one described should also contact the Federal Trade Commission and use the FTC Complaint Assistant. Add "IRS Telephone Scam" in the comments section of the complaint.

Taxpayers should be aware that there are other unrelated scams (such as a lottery sweepstakes) and solicitations (such as debt relief) that fraudulently claim to be from the IRS. The IRS encourages taxpayers to be vigilant against phone and email scams that use the IRS as a lure.

The IRS does not initiate contact with taxpayers by email to request personal or financial information. This includes any type of electronic communication, such as text messages and social media channels. The IRS also does not ask for PINs, passwords or similar confidential access information for credit card, bank or other financial accounts. Recipients should not open any attachments or click on any links contained in the message. Instead, forward the email to [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov).

More information on how to report phishing scams involving the IRS is available on the genuine IRS website. The IRS will always send taxpayers a written notification of any tax due via the U.S. mail. The IRS never asks for credit card, debit card or prepaid card information over the telephone. For more information or to report a scam, go to [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) and type "scam" in the search box.