

Tax Bill Scam

IRS warns of a new tax bill scam

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We certainly understand if the latest IRS imposter scam makes you queasy: it involves a fake IRS tax notice that claims you owe money as a result of the Affordable Care Act.

The IRS says the fake notices are designed to look like real IRS CP2000 notices, which the agency sends if information it receives about your income doesn't match the information reported on your tax return. The IRS says many people have gotten the bogus notices, which usually claim you owe money for the previous tax year under the Affordable Care Act.

It's one of many IRS imposter scams that have popped up. As tax season nears, we'll see more. The good news? There are red-flag warnings that can help you avoid becoming a victim. For example, the IRS will never:

- Initiate contact with you by email or through social media.
- Ask you to pay using a gift card, pre-paid debit card, or wire transfer.
- Request personal or financial information by email, texts, or social media.
- Threaten to immediately have you arrested or deported for not paying.

In the new scam, the fake CP2000 notices often arrive as an attachment to an email — a red-flag — or by U.S. mail. Other telltale signs of this fraud:

- There may be a "payment" link within the email. Scam emails can link you to sites that steal your personal information, take your money, or infect your computer with malware. Don't click on the link.
- The notices request that a check be made out to "I.R.S." Real CP2000s ask taxpayers to make their checks out to "United States Treasury" if they agree they owe taxes.

In the version we saw, a payment voucher refers to letter number LTR0105C, and requests that checks be sent to the "Austin Processing Center" in Texas. But scammers are crafty. They could send messages with a variety of return addresses.

You can see an image of a real CP2000 notice on the IRS web page, [Understanding Your CP2000 Notice](#). If you get a scam IRS notice, forward it to phishing@irs.gov and then delete it from your email account. Let the FTC know too.

Tips to Prevent Medicare Fraud

Do's

- Do protect your Medicare number (on your Medicare card) and your Social Security Number (on your Social Security card). Treat your Medicare card like it's a credit card.
- Do remember that nothing is ever "free." Don't accept offers of money or gifts for free medical care.
- Do ask questions. You have a right to know everything about your medical care including the costs billed to Medicare.
- Do educate yourself about Medicare. Know your rights and know what a provider can and can't bill to Medicare.
- Do use a calendar to record all of your doctor's appointments and what tests or X-rays you get. Then check your Medicare statements carefully to make sure you got each service listed and that all the details are correct. If you spend time in a hospital, make sure the admission date, discharge date, and diagnosis on your bill are correct.
- Do be wary of providers who tell you that the item or service isn't usually covered, but they "know how to bill Medicare" so Medicare will pay.
- Do make sure you understand how a plan works before you join.
- Do always check your pills before you leave the pharmacy to be sure you got the correct medication, including whether it's a brand or generic and the full amount. If you don't get your full prescription, report the problem to the pharmacist.
- Do report suspected instances of fraud.

Don'ts

- Don't allow anyone, except your doctor or other Medicare providers, to review your medical records or recommend services.
- Don't contact your doctor to request a service that you don't need.
- Don't let anyone persuade you to see a doctor for care or services you don't need.
- Don't accept medical supplies from a door-to-door salesman. If someone comes to your door claiming to be from Medicare or Medicaid, remember that Medicare and Medicaid don't send representatives to your home to sell products or services.
- Don't be influenced by certain media advertising about your health. Many television and radio ads don't have your best interest at heart.
- Don't give your Medicare card, Medicare number, Social Security card, or Social Security Number to anyone except your doctor or other authorized Medicare provider.

To report fraud call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).