

Tax Season Gives Rise to Identity Theft

In 2014, there were 83 cases filed with the Franklin Police Department where criminals filed fraudulent federal and/or state tax returns using a victim's Social Security number or other personal identifying information. Many citizens will not have any idea that they have become the victim of tax related identity theft until they try to file their current return and it is rejected by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or the Wisconsin Department of Revenue (WDOR).

In the event that you are advised by your tax preparer, the IRS, or the WDOR that you are the victim of tax related identity theft, take the following steps to report the crime:

1. File a report with the Franklin Police Department.
 - a. This can be done in person at the police department or an Officer will come to your home.
 - b. You will be asked to provide personal identification information that the IRS requires to help in investigating your complaint. *(This information is not shared with anyone other than the IRS or the WDOR.)*
 - c. You will be asked to complete an Identity Theft Questionnaire that will assist in the investigation of your complaint. Complete it and return it as soon as possible. *(An Officer will give you a questionnaire or provide you with an online link to a fillable PDF form.)*
2. File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at **www.identitytheft.gov** or the FTC Identity Theft Hotline at 1-877-438-4338 or TTY 1-866-653-4621.
3. Contact one of the three major credit bureaus to place a **"fraud alert"** on your credit records.
 - a. **www.Equifax.com** or 1-800-525-6285
 - b. **www.Experian.com** or 1-888-397-3742
 - c. **www.TransUnion.com** or 1-800-680-7289
4. Respond immediately to any IRS notice mailed to you. Call the number provided in the notice that you receive. *(The IRS **will not** contact you via email. This includes any type of electronic communication, such as text messaging and social media. Report suspicious online or emailed phishing scams to **phishing@irs.gov**).*
5. Complete **IRS Form 14039**. A fillable form can be found at **IRS.gov**. Fill it out, print it, and then mail or fax it according to instructions on the form. *(If you are not able to obtain the form via the internet on your own, an Officer will provide you with a copy of the form.)*
6. Pay your taxes and file your tax return, even if you must do so via paper.

You can reduce your risk for tax related identity theft by the following:

- Don't routinely carry your Social Security Card or any document with your SSN on it.
- Don't give a business your SSN just because they ask for it. Provide it only when absolutely necessary.
- Protect your personal financial information at home and on your computer.
- Check your credit report form annually. *(You are entitled to a **free copy** of your credit report from **each of the three** credit bureaus annually. If you space out those requests, one to each bureau, every 4 months, you can cover the entire year.)*
- Check your Social Security Administration earnings statements annually.
- Protect your personal computers by using firewalls, anti-spam/virus software, update security patches with your operating system, and routinely change passwords for internet accounts.
- Don't give out personal information over the telephone, through mail, or the internet unless you have either initiated the contact or are sure you know who is asking for the information.