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## HEALTHCARE ACCOUNTING ADVISORS

### IRS Phone Scammers Threaten Taxpayers

Many taxpayers have received what they thought were phone calls from IRS agents demanding immediate tax payments. These calls are from scammers trying to extort payments from innocent taxpayers. According to the IRS, phone scams continue to be a serious issue. The scammers use differing scripts but in most cases the callers threaten taxpayers with arrest or court action if a payment is not immediately made to the IRS. These scams are common throughout the country, especially in South Florida. In fact, during May five suspects were arrested in Miami for defrauding 1,500 victims of nearly \$2 million.

It seems so unlikely that a caller would be able to impersonate an IRS agent and convince a taxpayer that a problem exists and then collect a payment. Since many fear the IRS, and because the IRS impersonators are aggressive and threatening, some taxpayers have fallen for the scam and paid money to avoid the threatened IRS prosecution.

According to the IRS website, phone scams remain on their "Dirty Dozen" list of tax scams for the 2016 filing season. According to IRS Commissioner John Koskinen, if you receive an unexpected phone call from the IRS, then you are probably not hearing from the IRS. Rest assured that the IRS generally sends mail correspondence a number of times before attempting to call a taxpayer. Additionally, the IRS does not demand payment without first giving taxpayers the opportunity to question or appeal any amount they say is due. Additionally, scammers ask for immediate payment using cash, prepaid debit cards, wire transfers, MoneyGrams and most recently (and unbelievably) iTunes cards. The IRS does not demand immediate payment and would not ask for a payment to be made via cash or debit card. Furthermore, the IRS will never call and threaten to arrest a taxpayer for not paying a tax, request a credit card number over the phone or require the use of a specific payment method to pay taxes.

Many phone scammers have altered or spoofed their caller ID numbers to make it look like the call is coming from the IRS. They may also have the victim's name, address and other personal information to make the call sound official.

The Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA), have received reports

of roughly 896,000 phone scammer contacts and are aware of over 5,000 victims collectively paying over \$26.5 million as a result of scams. Anyone receiving a call from the IRS demanding payment of taxes should refuse to give out any personal information and should hang up immediately. Additionally, TIGTA may be called at 1-800-366-4484 or visit the "IRS Impersonation Scam Reporting" web page.

As tax scams are becoming increasingly more prevalent, individuals should be aware of the methods being used by the scammers to avoid being victimized.

Best Regards,



**Jeffrey B. Kramer, CPA, CGMA**  
Partner  
[jeff.kramer@gskadvisors.com](mailto:jeff.kramer@gskadvisors.com)  
954.989.7462

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