

## **MORE TAX SCAMS**

I hope you are not tired of hearing about what I call the IRS imposter phone scam. This is the single most frequent report I get concerning scams and frauds, averaging about five reports each day. I wrote about this scam several times, but I will repeat myself, just briefly.

People report receiving a voice message, which sounds like a recorded phone call. The caller leaves a message that the IRS is filing suit against the person receiving the phone call, and the matter requires an immediate response. The caller will leave a phone number. Often this phone number will use a 202 area code, which is Washington DC. Many folks reporting this tell me their Caller ID also shows the call originating in the 202 area code. Most people don't return the call, but those who do are subjected to threats of arrest, lawsuit, or property seizure, unless they pay \$3000 up to \$5000 immediately.

This is a huge scam, from start to finish. The IRS does not make phone calls. They notify taxpayers of problems through the US Mail. When I say this is a huge scam, I mean the scammers are calling at least 10,000 people each week in the US. To date, 366,000 Americans reported these phone calls. Three thousand of them report themselves fooled by the scam, to the tune of \$15.5 million. So if you like to do math in your head, this works out to a success rate for the scammers of less than 1%, but the average take is over \$5100 for each success. That's a pretty good return! And that is what is just reported. Law enforcement knows fraud is a greatly under-reported crime

## **Other Tax Scams**

I learned in the last two weeks, scammers are working the tax collector imposter scam in reverse. The Iowa Department of Revenue warned taxpayers crooks disguising their phone numbers to look like the Iowa Revenue number, are calling around telling taxpayers of their eligibility for a tax refund. These callers want to know into what bank account to deposit the refund. This is attempting to get at your bank account. If you give up your bank account number, don't expect to keep any money there for long! If you receive such a call, don't give up any personal information.

Last week, someone in Dewitt reported a variation on this call. This man reported a call which looked like it came from the 202 area code

(Washington DC). When he answered, the caller told him “because you are such a good taxpayer, we want to give you \$5000”. The Dewitt man already received his tax refund, so knew this must be a scam.

### **Some Other Scams Not Involving Taxes**

A Clinton man reported he received a letter from the Social Security Administration, thanking him for opening an online account with them. The problem – he did not open an online account. Someone using his name and social security number created an account without his permission. With an online account, someone can divert your direct deposit benefit check to another bank account. In this case, the Clinton man followed the instructions in the letter, to call Social Security if he did not open this account. Because he acted so quickly, he prevented any diversion of his direct deposit.

After receiving this report, I contacted a special agent with Social Security Administration, who investigates fraud. She told me, Social Security is receiving thousands of these complaints, and traces it all back to criminals operating in the Caribbean.

A recent widow in the Delmar area reported someone claiming to work for VISA called her, wanting to verify her late husband’s bank account number. He knew a lot about her late husband, but she knew they didn’t do business with VISA. This is an example of how information in an obituary can be used by crooks to prey on survivors at a time when they most likely are trying to sort out the affairs of the recently deceased. If you recently suffered such a loss, you need to be aware of these kinds of scams.

Let me know about scams, fraud, or other crookedness you run across. Most of what I learn, I learn from you. Contact me at Seniors vs. Crime, Clinton County Sheriff’s Office, 563-242-9211 extension 4433, or email me at [randymeier@gapa911.us](mailto:randymeier@gapa911.us).

End of column/rmeier