

## PAY TAXES NOW – OR ELSE!

In some recent articles, I wrote about the IRS tax scam, with my last mention in early December 2014. But this scam shows no signs of going away, quite the reverse. Over 25% of all the calls I received in January came from folks reporting this scam. One interesting thing to me is, the script used by these scammers is almost always the same. It never seems to vary.

Most often, people reporting to me received a recorded phone message. The caller left a message like this, "We have been trying to reach you. This call is officially a final notice from the Internal Revenue Service. The reason of this call is to inform you the IRS is filing a lawsuit against you." The message went on to give a phone number. That number might look like a Washington DC number. Those who called the "IRS" found themselves talking to someone with a strong foreign accent, who demanded immediate payment for delinquent taxes. And if no immediate payment, the "IRS agent" threatened arrest within fifteen minutes to two days.

Of course all this is a scam and a hoax. The real Internal Revenue Service reports they received 94 such complaints in July 2013. That number jumped 8800% by December 2014, to 8293 complaints. And that's just the number reported.

The real Internal Revenue Service will not:

- Contact you about any tax debt by phone. When you have a tax problem, your first notification will come by mail
- Threaten to arrest you, deport you, or take away your driver's license
- Demand immediate payment
- Ask you pay your debt a specific way, for example demand you wire transfer money or pay with a prepaid money card (usually Green Dot MoneyPak)

Don't return these calls. Ignore them. If these calls cause you to question whether you might have a tax debt, you can call the real Internal Revenue Service at 800-829-1040.

Many of you who reported this scam to me commented how you feared those most vulnerable to this might be older senior citizens. I'm happy to tell you, no one I spoke with lost any money to this scam. Everyone figured it

out for what it is. These scammers target a wide range of ages, and from what I see, senior citizens get fewer of these calls than others. But everyone else is getting these calls.

I just read today a story written by a staff attorney for the Federal Trade Commission, Lisa Schifferle, who just got one of these calls. Her kids heard the message and it scared their wits out of them.

## **OTHER SCAMS**

### **UNPAID TICKETS**

Last week, Sheriff Lincoln issued a public warning about another type of imposters. The warning was prompted after law enforcement received at least three reports of someone posing as the warrant officer for the sheriff's office, calling people and demanding they pay unpaid traffic tickets. These unpaid tickets came from traffic enforcement cameras in Clinton, and the fines cost \$455. If you didn't pay, this caller told his victims to expect arrest pretty quickly.

This is also a scam. Police officers or sheriff's deputies do not call around collecting unpaid traffic tickets. And there are no traffic enforcement cameras in Clinton, never have been. What you might see mounted on traffic lights that look like a camera is a sensor designed to activate a light cycle.

If you are worried you did not pay some fines, call the clerk of court in the county where you might have gotten the fine. Those folks will let you know if you owe any money.

### **OPEN SOURCE EMAILS**

The FBI recently released a public warning concerning a scam they call the "business email compromise" scam. This scam is pretty specific to businesses using bank wire transfers to pay vendors or suppliers, but I did glean one nugget of advice which pertains to anyone running a small business. The warning told the public, using an open source email for your business is a bad idea. By open source, I mean something like Yahoo, Hotmail, or Gmail. Those open source email accounts are much more susceptible to hacking, and offer better targets to scammers. If you run a small business, pay the few dollars and get your own domain name.

### **JURY DUTY**

Kim Hess, the Clinton/Jackson Clerk of Court, warns of yet another imposter. According to Hess, several residents of Polk County, Iowa, received recent phone calls from someone posing as a sheriff's officer, Lieutenant Donaldson. This caller told his victims, they failed to show up for jury duty, and needed to pay a fine to make this go away. This victimized at least two people in Polk County.

Hess reminds us, if you did miss a jury summons, no one will call you to collect a fine. You will get a phone call on the day you failed to report. If you don't respond to the phone call, you will get a letter. And finally if you respond to neither, a deputy will serve you with a summons for contempt of court, requiring you to appear in front of judge.

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).

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