

March 8, 2017

To our Clients and Friends:

It seems as though examples of identity theft have become an everyday event. In recent months there has been a significant increase in fraud and identity theft attempts in tax-related matters. These scams oftentimes go unreported and may yield harmful results to both individuals and businesses. We'd like to take this opportunity to highlight one recent scam, as well as provide you with some helpful information to protect yourself from would-be identity thieves.

Avoid IRS Impersonators

A recent example of an identity theft scheme goes as follows: IRS impersonators have been mailing fraudulent IRS notices to potential targets indicating that taxes are owed due to provisions within to the Affordable Care Act. These fake notices are labeled "CP2000 for tax year 2015". The notices request taxpayers to remit payment directly to the IRS, care of a P.O. Box in Austin, Texas.

This scam is devised to exhort taxpayers into sending cash to these impostors. One way to identify such a scam would be to look to whom the payments are instructed to be made payable to, as any payments due to the IRS should always be made payable to the U.S Department of Treasury, not the IRS.

Another example of identity theft schemes include perpetrators calling you with threats of impending imprisonment or lawsuits. In these calls, they will attempt to retrieve sensitive information from you.

Please note that the IRS will never call you with threats of jail or lawsuits, as their mode of contacting you is normally the United States postal system.

Protecting against tax-related Identity theft

Some warning signs that you may be the victim of tax-related identity theft include:

- You receive a tax notice from the IRS indicating that they received more than one tax return from you. Please note that by our e-filing of your tax returns, we will be notified if a tax return has been filed under your social security number prior to the submission of your tax returns by us.
- You receive notification from the IRS or the Social Security Administration which indicates that you received wages from an employer whom you did not work for.

There are numerous ways to protect against identity theft, many of which take only a few minutes to implement including:

- Enhancing your security software such as firewalls, virus protection and encryption of your data files.
- Avoid leaving sensitive information exposed to others.
- Using stronger passwords.
- Backing up your files.
- Avoiding email scams such as phishing and malware.

- When receiving emails from unknown sources, do not open them directly, but rather proceed to their websites first in an attempt to see if they are legitimate organizations. Never open attachments in emails unless you know who sent them to you.
- Subscribe to an identity monitoring service such as Lifelock or Identity Guard.

These simple tips are a great first step at boosting your cyber security against impostors and identity theft.

If you ever become a victim of identity theft, it is recommended that you file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at identitytheft.gov. You should also contact one of the three major credit bureaus, Equifax, Experian, or TransUnion, and place a fraud alert on your credit records. If your identity theft issue is tax related, you should also contact the IRS identity theft hotline for support at 800-908-4490.

At *MillerSearles*, we take precautions to keep your private information private. We continually review changes in technologies to assist us with this goal.

We will continue to keep you abreast of the ever-changing attempts for the criminal element to conduct identity theft. Please don't hesitate to contact us if we can be of assistance.

Very truly yours,

MillerSearles LLC