

7 Tips to Frustrate a Fraudster During Tax Season



As Americans begin the process of filing tax returns, identity thieves are scheming to get their hands on that money. Tax identity theft has been the most common form of identity theft reported to the Federal Trade Commission for the past five years. The **Arkansas Bankers Association** is offering the following tips to help customers prevent tax ID Fraud.

1. **File Early.** File your tax return as soon as you're able giving criminals less time to use your information to file a false return.
2. **File on a protected wi-fi network.** If you're using an online service to file your return, be sure you're connected to a password-protected personal network. Avoid using public networks like a wi-fi hotspot at a coffee shop.
3. **Use a secure mailbox.** If you're filing by mail, drop your tax return at the post office or an official postal box instead of your mailbox at home. Some criminals look for completed tax return forms in home mailboxes during tax season.
4. **Find a tax preparer you trust.** If you're planning to hire someone to do your taxes, get recommendations and research a tax preparer thoroughly before handing over all of your financial information..
5. **Shred what you don't need.** Once you've completed your tax return, shred the sensitive documents that you no longer need and safely file away the ones you do.
6. **Beware of phishing scams by email, text or phone.** Scammers may try to solicit sensitive information by impersonating the IRS. Know that the IRS will not contact you by email, text or social media. If the IRS needs information, they will contact you by mail first.
7. **Keep an eye out for missing mail.** Fraudsters look for W-2s, tax refunds or other mail containing your financial information. If you don't receive your W-2s, and your employer indicates they've been mailed, or it looks like it has been previously opened upon delivery, contact the IRS immediately.

If you believe you're a victim of tax identity theft or if the IRS denies your tax return because one has previously been filed under your name, alert the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit at 1-800-908-4490.

