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AARP Helps Taxpayers Avoid IRS Imposter and Related Scams

New Poll Finds 1 in 4 Americans Often Not Prepared to Face Aggressive Scammers

WASHINGTON, DC—As tax time approaches, AARP's **Fraud Watch Network** is redoubling its efforts to help taxpayers avoid criminal imposters who aim to defraud them.

The problem is serious, with the Federal Trade Commission reporting that tax fraud ranked second in 2017 in types of identity theft reported, as over 82,000 reports were made last year. But a new poll from AARP, which surveyed 1,005 Americans by phone, reveals that people may have a false sense of security, as three-fifths (62 percent) report they're either extremely confident or very confident in their ability to detect fraud.



AARP Fraud Survey, March 2018

AARP is building on its robust antifraud efforts, which currently include a free fraud helpline (877-908-3360). New information and resources include the survey, training webinars, a **"Tax ID Theft" tip sheet**, and a new podcast series, called "The Perfect Scam." The series features tips from Frank Abagnale, whose personal story inspired the Spielberg film, "Catch Me if You Can," who now advises the FBI on how to outsmart con artists. Also, the April issue of *AARP Bulletin* will more broadly examine fraud, including an exclusive interview with US Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

"We see repeatedly that scammers who impersonate the Internal Revenue Service work year round at trying to swindle Americans, and they're particularly relentless in April," said AARP fraud expert Kathy Stokes. "While there's no simple solution, you can outsmart cons: file your taxes early, before they beat you to it, shred financial documents you no longer need and beware of high pressure tactics. The IRS will not call and threaten arrest for taxes owed, and they certainly won't ask for a gift card as a form of payment, but imposters will."

In its **new poll**, AARP found that many consumers are woefully at risk for the onslaught of Internal Revenue Service (IRS) scammers. Key findings include:

- **IRS scammers keep calling until they land victims, with one in four respondents (25 percent) receiving a phony call from someone impersonating an IRS agent over the last year.**
- **Nearly four out of five respondents (79 percent) haven't ordered a free copy of their credit report in the past 12 months.**
- **The IRS does not email or text for your information, but more than a quarter of respondents (26 percent) incorrectly believe or are uncertain about whether the IRS can text or email requests for personal or financial information.**

Criminals impersonating the IRS often make aggressive threats – of arrest, court action, confiscation of property, or even deportation unless they make immediate payment. The AARP campaign advises consumers that legitimate IRS representatives do not:

- Call you to demand immediate payment.
- Call you about taxes owed **without first having contacted you by mail.**
- Require you to use a specific payment method for your taxes, such as a gift card, prepaid debit card, or ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.
- Threaten to bring in local police or other law-enforcement groups to have you arrested for not paying.

For more information about the IRS scam and other tax-related frauds, visit www.aarp.org/FraudWatchNetwork. Consumers who think that they are being targeted by a scammer may call the AARP Fraud Helpline at 877-908-3360 and speak with a volunteer trained in fraud counseling.

"The Perfect Scam" podcast will launch on April 6 and will be available AARP's website and on popular podcasting platforms.

About our survey methodology: AARP conducted a national telephone research study among U.S. adults ages 18 and older on the issues of identity theft, security of personal information, and experience with tax fraud and imposter scams via Alan Newman Research. 1,005 telephone interviews (300 via landline telephones and 705 via cell phone) took place between March 14 and March 17, 2018, with a maximum statistical error of $\pm 3.1\%$ at the 95% level of confidence.

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About AARP

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With a nationwide presence and nearly 38 million members, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to families: health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also produces the nation's largest circulation publications: AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocates on social media.

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