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Contact Kylie Mason

Phone 850-245-0150

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

VIDEO CONSUMER ALERT: Tax Identity Theft Scams



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—In recognition of Tax Identity Theft Awareness Week, Attorney General Ashley Moody is issuing a Consumer Alert with tips for Floridians to avoid falling victim to tax and IRS scammers. One common scam involves the fraudulent filing of an individual's tax return in order to steal the refund. The best thing taxpayers can do to avoid scams like this is to file their taxes as early as possible.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "No one likes doing their taxes, but procrastination is the enemy when guarding against refund scams. File early and avoid giving your personal information out to those who would do you harm. Remember, the IRS will never call you and demand immediate payment. If you receive a call like this, just hang up."

With tax season in full swing, stay alert for fraudulent calls using telephone number spoofing technology that makes it appear as if the calls are coming from the IRS. The callers claim they are with the IRS and either request immediate payment or threaten hefty fines for noncompliance. Scammers try to get victims' Social Security numbers or other personal information, either to file a false return to steal the taxpayer's refund or fraudulently claim a taxpayer's child as a dependent preventing the child from being rightfully claimed on the victim's annual return.

Tips for avoiding tax identity theft scams and IRS scams include:

- File tax returns early in the season, if possible, to prevent scammers from fraudulently filing first;
- Know that the IRS will only initiate contact by mail. The IRS will also allow taxpayers to question or appeal the amount owed, and never demand immediate payment without allowing the taxpayer time to substantiate the amount owed;
- Hang up if someone calls asking for personal information or requests payment. If the caller could be from an established business or legal authority, locate the entity's number on its official website and call to verify;
- Protect personal information, such as SSNs, throughout the year. Only give the information out if the recipient is well known and providing the information is absolutely necessary;
- Use a secure internet connection if filing online or mail the return directly from the post office; and
- Research tax preparers thoroughly before handing over personal information.

Report any instance of fraudulent activity this tax season to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration by filing an online complaint at TIGTA.gov or calling 1(800) 366-4484.

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The Florida Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division issues Consumer Alerts to inform Floridians of emerging scams, new methods used to commit fraud, increased reports of common scams, or any other deceptive practice. Consumer Alerts are designed to notify Floridians about scams and available refunds in an effort to prevent financial losses or other harm caused by deceptive practices. Anyone encountering a scam should report the incident to the Florida Attorney General's Office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or visiting MyFloridaLegal.com. To view recent Consumer Alerts and for other information about avoiding scams, visit MyFloridaLegal.com/ConsumerAlert.