

Don't let scammers ruin holiday gift card giving

Taxpayers should watch out for gift card scams especially during the holiday season. The IRS never asks for or accepts gift cards as payment for a tax bill.

Common holiday scams

Scammers may try to trick taxpayers into falling for the gift card scam. With this scam, criminals may impersonate government or collections officials and send official-looking requests for gift cards to resolve an outstanding debt or issue. The scammer may ask the victim to purchase the gift cards from different stores to avoid the suspicion of store employees. Once the taxpayer buys the gift cards, the scammer will ask the taxpayer to provide the gift card number and PIN.

Scammers could also:

- Send emails that appear to be from a legitimate company but are not.
- Pose as an IRS agent and call the taxpayer stating that the taxpayer is linked to criminal activity.
- Threaten or harass the taxpayer by telling them that they must pay a fake tax penalty.

Find out more about how to avoid tax scams and fraud.

How to tell if it's really the IRS

The IRS will never:

- Call to demand immediate payment using a specific payment method such as a gift card, prepaid debit card or wire transfer. Generally, the IRS will first mail a bill to any taxpayer who owes taxes.
- Demand that taxpayers pay taxes without the opportunity to question or appeal the amount they owe. All taxpayers should be aware of their rights.
 - Threaten to bring in local police, immigration officers or other law enforcement to have the taxpayer arrested for not paying.
 - Threaten to revoke the taxpayer's driver's license, business licenses or immigration status.

What to do if targeted by a scam

Anyone who has been a target of a scam should contact the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration to report a phone scam. Use the IRS Impersonation Scam Reporting webpage or call 800-366-4484. Taxpayers targeted by scams can also report to the Federal Trade Commission or visit their state attorney general.