

NEWS FROM SCDCA

South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs



Brandolyn Thomas Pinkston, Administrator

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SCDCA TAX TIME TIPS AND IDENTITY THEFT

Columbia, SC...The South Carolina Department of Consumer (SCDCA) Affairs would like to remind consumers to be vigilant about scam artists, especially as tax-filing season approaches its deadline. An identity thief is constantly looking for that easy access to your name, address, bank and credit account information and most definitely, your Social Security number (SSN) and tax time provides that treasure chest of opportunity. **“It is bad enough when someone steals your identity, but to have them steal your tax refund is like pouring salt on the wound,”** said Brandolyn Thomas Pinkston, SCDCA Administrator.

SCDCA suggests the following TIPS to help consumers minimize the chances of being scammed:

***Tax Preparer**—Check out who works on your taxes, especially new or seasonal offices.

***Paper Security**—Keep tax paperwork in a safe place. These papers have all of your personal information including your SSN.

***Document Disposal**—Shred papers that includes personal information, such as receipts, credit card account numbers, SSN, loan documents, all contain information that an identity thief can convert into a new account in your name.

***Mail Theft**

- When mailing tax documents, always take them directly to the Post Office.
- If you use an outside Post Office Box, drop your mail before the last pickup of the day, leaving mail overnight gives a thief more opportunity to steal mail.
- Do not leave tax mail in an outgoing box at work, or in an unlocked box for pickup.

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About the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs:

Established by the Consumer Protection code in 1974, the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs represents the interests of South Carolina consumers. Our mission is to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, mediation, enforcement and education. For more information, visit

www.sccoconsumer.gov.

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***Computer Security**—Many taxpayers file online, or store financial information on their computers, it is important to install updated security programs. If your computer is linked to the Internet, make sure to have updated firewall software to help protect against invasion.

***E-mails**—Consumers should know that the IRS does not send out unsolicited e-mails asking for personal information. Phishing or mass e-mails designed to dupe consumers into handing over valuable information has become prevalent. Consumers should not respond to these e-mails.

To report tax fraud contact the IRS Fraud Hotline at 1.800.829.0433 and report identity theft to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at www.consumer.gov/theft or 1.800.829.0499. For information on other consumer protection issues contact the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs, 3600 Forest Drive, Suite 300, Post Office Box 5757, Columbia, South Carolina 29250 or 803.734.4200 or 1.800.922.1594 (toll-free in SC) or visit our Website at www.sconsumer.gov.

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