



NEWS FROM SCDCA

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
Carri Grube Lybarker, Administrator



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SCDCA Media Contact: Juliana Harris, 803.734.4296
Email: JHarris@scconsumer.gov

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1.800.922.1594 (toll free in SC)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Five Tax Time Tips You Need to Know

Columbia, SC... The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs (SCDCA) is urging consumers to be on the lookout for scammers and unscrupulous tax preparers as the deadline for filing taxes approaches.

SCDCA encourages consumers to follow the five tips below to safeguard against the various pitfalls of tax time:

1. **Act quickly.** Consumers should file their taxes as soon as possible. This lessens the likelihood of someone else filing in the consumer's name. Additionally, if a consumer is contacted by the IRS, it is very important to respond quickly. The faster identity theft is addressed, the better.
2. **Protect your personal information.** Never provide personal identifying information over the phone, email, or through the mail to someone you do not know. An increasingly reported tax scam involves fraudsters contacting consumers claiming to represent the IRS. These fraudsters aim to convince consumers to pay supposed tax debts-- and if they don't, the consumer will face high fees, legal action, or even deportation. Consumers who receive this call should hang up and contact the IRS directly.
3. **Research tax preparers.** Consumers should check a preparer's qualifications before employing them. All paid tax preparers must have a Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN) from the IRS. If the preparer is a Certified Public Accountant, they should be licensed with the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation.
(www.llr.state.sc.us/pol.asp).

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4. **E-file carefully.** When filing taxes online, be sure anti-virus, spyware, and firewalls are up to date and running. Ensure the website you are visiting is secure- look for a small padlock on the screen and that the web address begins with “https.”

5. **Track your refund.** Avoid using third party sites and simply go to www.irs.gov/Refunds for the “Where’s my Refund” interactive tool.

To view our Spotlight on *Tax Time Predators*, visit www.consumer.sc.gov and click “News Releases and Publications,” then “Spotlight.” Additionally, if you think you may be a victim of tax identity theft, please contact SCDCA’s Identity Theft Unit at 1-800-922-1594.

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SCDCA aims to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, complaint mediation, enforcement and education. To file a complaint or get information on consumer issues, visit www.consumer.sc.gov or call toll-free, 1.800.922.1594.

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