

SCAM ALERT NOTICE

What are they up to now?

Something new seems to pop its ugly head every week or so. Whether it's TAX TIME, or Social Security, Veterans Issues, your Banking; you name it, and someone out there will try to scam you out of your life savings. There are some new methods that are now being employed and these are even more scary than before.

These new attempts are using the names of special websites, like the IRS, Social Security etc. The site will look nearly the same as the real thing. The layout will be the same with maybe a spelling error or a slight difference in the name.

For instance, the Internal Revenue Service uses the label "IRS." The fake one may use "I.R.S." or some variation. Most website have links to something. When using a PC or MAC, if you hover over a link with the mouse pointer, the underlying link should be exposed on the status line at the bottom of the window. On a tablet or smartphone, press on a link and hold it, do not let go. After a second or two a little window pops up and one thing is displays is the real link. If you see something not proper, just touch outside the popup and it will go away.

A second thing happening is a phone call. On your caller ID, using again the IRS, the IRS or I.R.S. will show and a phone number of the real IRS. This is called "Spoofing" where they use software to make it look like it is coming from other than their point of origin. (I have had my own phone number show in the caller ID.) The person you talk to will usually be an actual American and seem quite knowledgeable on the subject at hand. In the IRS case they will usually ask for your last four SS number digits. Even if you refuse, they will still be calm and nice, even offering his name and a phone number you can call to "check him out". The real IRS does not do this nor does Social Security or even your bank. Any calls like this, call the phone number you actually know. Your SS card, Medicare card etc have the proper number(s) to call.

The third method with this is letters from the so-called organizations. While some do send letters, they will not demand money, or threats of jail etc. They may ask you to call them, but will have you get the number yourself, or if there is a number, you will need to make sure it is legitimate. They are not hard to find. The one I have seen on the "IRS" uses an official looking letterhead showing "I.R.S." It also showed a bill for taxes owed, even offering a discount for a quick reply. It said "make your check out to the I.R.S." That is even more a red flag. When you send in a check to the IRS, it is made out to the "United States Treasury" not the IRS.

These are just a few examples. There are real sites out there that keep track of what is happening. One that I use is "The USVCP" (U.S. Veteran Compensation Programs). They have a lot of good information and often put up scam alerts...

<http://www.veteranprograms.com/scams.html>

Another is the FTC (Federal Trade Commission Consumer Information page)

<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/scam-alerts/>

Have a look at these and please be careful out there.

E.E.S.

