

Shavano

May 2020

A publication exclusively for the residents of Shavano Park

LIVING

The Klein Family



Debbie Weber Photography

Be Tax-Scam Savvy

Hardworking taxpayers have lost millions of dollars and their personal information to tax scams. It's a problem that's not going away. Your best defense is to be vigilant and arm yourself with the latest news. Let's look at three of the top scams circulating right now. Have you experienced them?

Social Security Scams

The IRS is warning taxpayers to be on the lookout for a new twist on a scam related to Social Security numbers. The scam usually originates with a caller claiming to be able to suspend or cancel the victim's Social Security number due to an overdue tax bill. Don't fall for it.

First, your SSN is not affected by your tax bill, and it doesn't need to be reactivated or confirmed to remain valid. The immediacy of the call is also a red flag. The IRS would never threaten to immediately bring in local police or other law enforcement groups to have a taxpayer arrested for not paying. Plus, the IRS would never demand taxes be paid without allowing the taxpayer to question

or appeal the amount owed. A series of letters will almost always arrive before any other form of communication is initiated.

Charity Fraud Around Major Disasters

Unfortunately, criminals often strike along with major disasters like fires, floods, and outbreaks like COVID-19. According to the IRS, these fraudulent schemes usually start with unsolicited contact by telephone, social media, email, or even in person. Bogus websites or phone number masking might make the soliciting "nonprofit" appear legitimate. The scammers may even claim to be working for or on behalf of the IRS to help victims file casualty loss claims and get tax refunds.

Be careful when being generous. Research the organization, and get their legitimate contact information from the Tax Exempt Organization Search at [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov/charities) or through a charity evaluator like [CharityNavigator.org](https://www.charitynavigator.org). Never give or send cash (it's better to give in a way that's traceable, like a check or credit card), and don't give out personal financial information to anyone who contacts you for it.

Fraudulent Tax Reminders

Last summer, the IRS detected a new email scam with subject line variations that include "Automatic Income Tax Reminder" or "Electronic Tax Return Reminder." The emails have links that show an IRS.gov-like website with details that appear to be about the taxpayer's refund, electronic return or tax account. The emails contain a temporary or one-time password to "access" the files. But when taxpayers click through, it turns out to be a malicious file. The malware allows the imposters to gain control of the victim's computer or secretly download software that tracks every keystroke, eventually giving them passwords to sensitive accounts, such as financial accounts.

The golden rule here is to not click on links within unsolicited emails. The IRS never initiates emails about tax refunds or sensitive information like PINs, passwords, or similar access information.

Protect yourself from these scams. Hang up the phone, don't click on the email, do your research. If it's the IRS that's supposedly contacting you, log in to your account at [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov), call the IRS back directly (don't use the number the solicitor gives you), or contact your CPA to find out if it's legitimate. In these cases, it's better to be safe than sorry.

Steven Bankler has more than 43 years of experience in the accounting industry. Steven's expertise lies in consulting, planning, tax, and asset protection as well as exit-strategy services for closely held businesses. He also provides litigation support (both as a testifying expert witness and a consulting expert), business negotiations and estate planning. Visit www.bankler.com for additional tax-strategy tips and to learn more about Steven Bankler, CPA, Ltd.

Steven Bankler, CPA, Ltd.

Our Job is To Put Money in Your Pocket!®

CONSIDERING CHANGING ADVISORS? LOOKING FOR A PROACTIVE CPA?

If you have a family-owned or closely-held business, we're now taking applications for potential clients.

Call to apply for a
FREE initial interview.



210.691.3133
bankler.com

Visit our website for
Client Spotlight
success stories.