Police Beat

SCPD Crime Prevention Newsletter

Vol. 3 Issue 3 October 2016

IRS scam artists arrested in India

That does not mean St. Charles residents should let guards down

photo courtesy of the Wall Street Journal

by Kelly Phillips Erb
Forbes staff

Dozens of arrests have been made in the phone scams plaguing American taxpayers. Acting on a tip, 70 call-center workers were arrested for their alleged roles in tax-related scams following a police raid on call centers outside of Mumbai, India. More than 750 call center workers were detained in what a police spokesperson characterized as an ongoing investigation.

For years now, scammers posing as Internal Revenue Service agents and officers have been making calls to taxpayers, demanding immediate payment and threatening jail or deportation for those who failed to comply. The scam has netted them millions, and emboldened scammers to try new tactics, including making "robo-calls", or automated calls leaving threatening messages. Enforcement has been difficult because many of the calls are thought to have originated outside of the U.S. Calls were generally made using Voice Over Internet Protocol technology because it's a cheap and easy way to mask the origin of the calls and "trick" your Caller ID to show up as the IRS or other government agency. Scammers then demand immediate payment over the phone by hard-to-trace methods like cash, wire, or services like MoneyGram. In one variation of the scam, scammers demand payment using iTunes gift cards. iTunes gift cards can be used to make purchases on the App Store, iTunes Store, iBooks Store, Mac App Store or to buy Apple Music memberships.

Requests for "tax payments" made using the cards – though it sounds outlandish – were successful; according to the United States Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, at least 328 people paid out a total of $1.4 million to the scammers using iTunes gift cards as of midyear.

Reports from those involved in the latest arrests indicate that, with this particular network, the bogus calls had been made from as many as seven call centers outside of Mumbai for more than a year, netting around 10 million rupees per day, or $149,835.20.

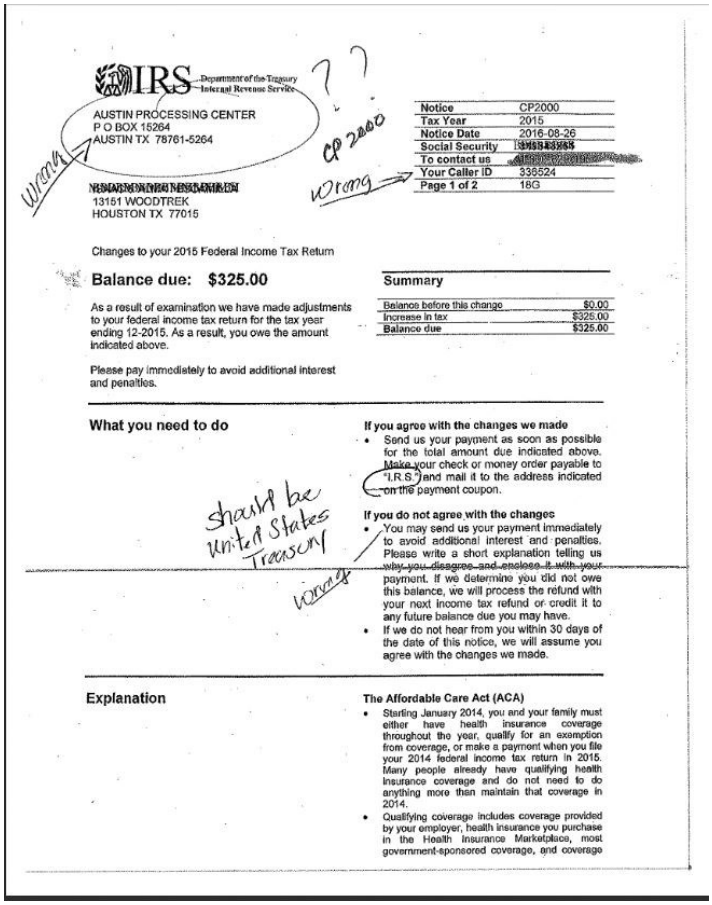
Continue to page two for more information about this scam, and how to protect yourself.

IRS scam continues via US mail delivery

With the recent arrests made in India, you should notice a decrease in the IRS scam phone calls. However, we know that criminals certainly are industrious. When a hole is left, you can bet somebody will be there to fill the void. Law enforcement is aware that not all of these calls are coming from India. Scams have been known to originate from other places like the Philippines, which has more call centers than India, and the Ukraine.

Scammers, perhaps sensing a slow down in the threatening-voicemail racket, have resorted to sending official-looking letters to unsuspecting homeowners, as seen in the picture to the right. This letter was received by an Aurora resident. Notice the multiple mistakes and inaccuracies.

Throughout the years, law enforcement has always told residents that any correspondence from a government agency will always come via the mail. The scam artists seemingly picked up on this, and now fake letters are being sent. It is vital that you remain vigilant, and always question any time a person or entity demands money. Take your time to investigate, and contact authorities directly should you have a question.



IRS Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service

AUSTIN PROCESSING CENTER
P O BOX 15264
AUSTIN TX 78761-5264

13151 WOODTREK
HOUSTON TX 77015

Notice	CP2000
Tax Year	2015
Notice Date	2016-08-26
Social Security	[redacted]
To contact us	[redacted]
Your Caller ID	336524
Page 1 of 2	18G

Changes to your 2015 Federal Income Tax Return

Balance due: $325.00

As a result of examination we have made adjustments to your federal income tax return for the tax year ending 12-2015. As a result, you owe the amount indicated above.

Please pay immediately to avoid additional interest and penalties.

Summary

Balance before this change	$0.00
Increase in tax	$325.00
Balance due	$325.00

What you need to do

If you agree with the changes we made

- Send us your payment as soon as possible for the total amount due indicated above. Make your check or money order payable to "I.R.S." and mail it to the address indicated on the payment coupon.

If you do not agree with the changes

- You may send us your payment immediately to avoid additional interest and penalties. Please write a short explanation telling us why you disagree and enclose it with your payment. If we determine you did not owe this balance, we will process the refund with your next income tax refund or credit it to any future balance due you may have.
- If we do not hear from you within 30 days of the date of this notice, we will assume you agree with the changes we made.

Explanation

The Affordable Care Act (ACA)

- Starting January 2014, you and your family must either have health insurance coverage throughout the year, qualify for an exemption from coverage, or make a payment when you file your 2014 federal income tax return in 2015. Many people already have qualifying health insurance coverage and do not need to do anything more than maintain that coverage in 2014.
- Qualifying coverage includes coverage provided by your employer, health insurance you purchase in the Health Insurance Marketplace, most government-sponsored coverage, and coverage

Taxpayers need to remain vigilant as new email scam hits

The email may read as follows:

Good morning,

Thank you for your request for IRS Support Center. Your Tax Return for $6,775.00 has been placed.

Here is your Tax Report.
Available only for computers, not smartphones view.

The IRS is committed to protecting the privacy rights of America's taxpayers. These rights are protected by the Internal Revenue Code, the Privacy Act of 1974, the Freedom of Information Act, and IRS policies and practices. Visit the IRS Electronic Freedom of Information Act Reading Room for more information about these laws.

by Kelly Phillips Erb
Forbes staff

With all of the media coverage focusing on scammers posing as IRS agents by phone, it may be tempting to let your guard down and assume that the scammers are on the run. They are not. They are still making the rounds, trying to trick taxpayers into giving up personal information or sending payments. That means not only bogus calls but also letters and emails. A quick read of the email to the left results in a number of red flags: First, the IRS doesn't send personal tax information via email; second, the IRS won't issue a "tax report" by mail or email; third, there are multiple problems with grammar and language in the email (for example, you don't "place" a tax return with IRS nor do you request "for" IRS Support Center); fourth, there is no "IRS Support Center."

The email purports to come from an irs.gov email address, but a check on the header shows that the email is actually from another domain which is no longer available.

STC residents plagued by recent car burglaries

Recently, multiple residents on city's southeast side were victims of a string of car burglaries.

In all, no less than 16 incidents occurred during the early morning hours of October 20. What was a common factor that officers heard from the victims? The vehicle doors were left unlocked while parked in a driveway or on the roadway in front of the house. In fact, in all but two of the reports (87 percent), it was determined the offenders simply pulled on the car door to see if it was unlocked, and then took what they wanted, typically cash and/or electronics. Third-quarter (July 1-Sept. 30) statistics show that again, forced entry was confirmed in only two car burglaries. The rest (89 percent) were to unlocked vehicles.

James086

The St. Charles Police Department has publicized this phenomenon in the past. It's certainly nice that residents feel secure enough in their surroundings to leave their valuables unsecured in their vehicles, but time and again we have seen burglars with this same mode of operation. Burglars are much more apt to enter vehicles that are left unlocked than to force entry to a vehicle and run the risk of making noise that could get them caught.

We must be smarter about securing our valuables. Bring that work laptop or GPS unit inside for the night. Keep your loose change out of view.

If you must leave high-ticket items in your vehicle, make sure they are out of sight, and then make sure the doors are locked!

Courting trouble: Be aware the jury duty scam is back

by Sid Kirchheimer
AARP

Having continued for more than a decade, the jury duty scam remains one of the most successful multipurpose intimidation impostor schemes. Fraudsters can not only get a quick payoff but also enough personal details for future identity theft.

Here's how the scheme works: It starts with a phone call, usually made after hours (one clue it's a scam), that claims you are facing imminent arrest because you didn't report for mandated jury duty. This news may seem authentic, with your caller ID showing phone numbers for a courthouse or law enforcement agency, and the con artist citing names of actual police and judges. The aim is to scare you into making the usual response: "What?! I never received a jury duty summons!"

Then comes the gotcha: To avoid arrest, the caller says, you can pay a fine (typically requested in the form of a prepaid debit or gift card). And to verify he's called the correct violator, the swindler asks to confirm your identity by soliciting personal information, including your name, birth date, Social Security number and other ID theft-worthy details.

The verdict on this familiar and widespread ruse (recently reported from coast to coast): Hang up without providing any information about yourself — and certainly don't run off to purchase a Green Dot MoneyPak or iTunes gift card. Here's why:

- Authentic jury duty notifications, as well as "no show" summonses, are nearly always delivered by mail. In rare instances prospective jurors may be telephoned by legitimate courthouse employees, but only *after a* jury duty summons was mailed but returned to sender because it couldn't be delivered — and you won't be asked for personal information such as your Social Security number, birth date or driver's license number.
- Legitimate police officials never give a head's-up phone call warning of an impending arrest, about missing jury duty or any other infraction.
- These fake phone calls often come in the evening, after the courthouse has closed and its employees have left. Gleaning targets' names and addresses from phone directories or other public records, scammers often call after usual working hours because they know they have a better chance of reaching their intended victims.

Caller ID can be manipulated to display the name and phone number of any agency or business, so don't be fooled. If you have concerns, look up the courthouse phone number (don't rely on caller-provided numbers) and verify missed jury allegations with the jury duty coordinator or court clerk's office.

PD parking lot provides a spot for Internet exchanges

The St. Charles Police Department has made its parking lot a convenient place for residents to complete internet exchanges, like those typically made via Craigslist and Facebook.

Instead of having a stranger come to your house, or instead of going to meet a stranger in a vacant parking lot, residents should feel free to use the police department's parking lot, 211 N. Riverside Ave., to complete the exchanges in a public, well-lit area. Those wanting to use the parking lot do not need to get prior approval from the department.

Be aware that the lobby of the police department should not be utilized in this manner, only the parking lot. **Please be advised that those wanting to utilize the parking lot should not ask the department to provide an officer to stand by during the exchange**. The police department will not provide that service, and any transactions will not be monitored.

Any issues that arise out of any transaction, short of a criminal act, will be considered a civil matter between the parties, and will not be investigated by the police department.

Car seat installation available

Did you know the St. Charles Police Department has several state-certified officers that will help you install your child safety seats correctly? The state and the city take child passenger protection extremely seriously, and all installers go through a rigorous three-day class to be certified. Officers will show you how to properly install everything from infant to booster seats.

Appointments are available between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. each Thursday at the police department, 211 N. Riverside Ave. Contact administrative assistant Sara Cass at 630-443-3777 to schedule an appointment.

Burglary protection for home

Conducting a security assessment of your home can be key to protecting family and belongings from burglaries. The St. Charles Police Department has developed a free survey that residents can download and use to make a house more secure.

Included in the survey are tips on how to fortify doors, windows and other points of entry, as well as info on how to secure your home when going on vacation. The survey can be found on the crime prevention page of the police department's web site at www.stcharlesil.gov/public-safety/crime-prevention.

Third quarter police reports

The following stats represent the number of reports taken by the police department for the period July 1 through Sept. 30, 2016.

Commercial burglary - 3

Residential burglary - 11

Burglary from motor vehicle - 22

Retail theft - 76

Criminal damage to property - 36

DUI (alcohol and drugs) - 45