

I'm From the "Government" and I'm Here to Help You

Except it's not a government employee calling you, it's a scammer.

The Federal Trade Commission's 2020 statistics show that people reported losing more than \$174 million in government-imposter scams. The median reported loss was \$1,250.

With March announcements from the Internal Revenue Service that the individual federal income tax filing due date for the 2020 tax year has been extended to May 17, 2021 Notice 2021-21 PDF it's an opportunity for scammers to try and con people into believing the fraudulent calls they make and emails they send are from the IRS.

Emily Wu, an attorney with the FTC, provides these suggestions for identifying government-imposter scams:

- Don't trust caller ID. Scammers manipulate caller ID to look like the call is coming from an official government number. Look up the government agency's number yourself, if you're concerned, and give them a call. But don't use the number in caller ID.
- Government agencies like the Internal Revenue Service or the Social Security Administration won't call, text, or email you out of the blue to demand payment right away.
- Nobody legit will ever tell you to pay with gift cards, money transfers or cryptocurrency.
- Never share personal information with anyone who contacts you. If you're worried, look up the government agency's information yourself to check with them.

Scammers and fraudsters may threaten fines or jail time if you don't pay immediately or give up information. It's part of the con. Their goal is to scare you into doing something quickly that you would never do if you had the time to think it through.

Share these tips with others. Spot a scam or fraud? Consider reporting it at www.ReportFraud.ftc.gov