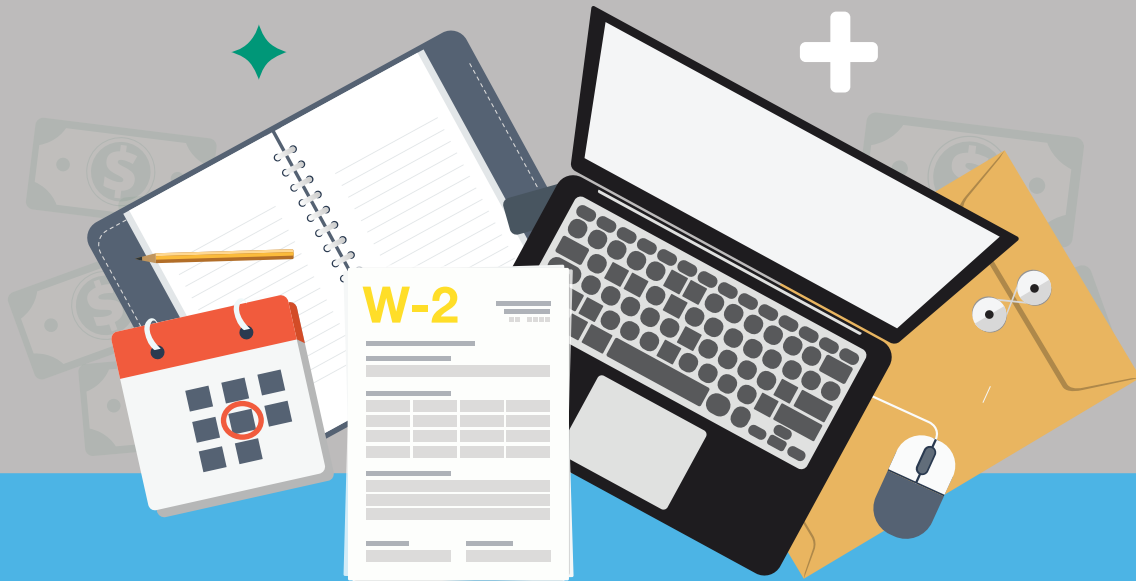


# IDENTITY

## FRAUD DURING TAX SEASON



Throughout the year, identity thieves are on the prowl to try and steal your personal information. As a result, consumers should be vigilant about protecting against identity fraud — especially during tax season. In previous years, it's estimated that the IRS paid between \$90 million to \$380 million in fraudulent tax refunds.\*

That doesn't mean you're helpless against fraudsters — following these 5 recommendations from the IRS and other trusted consumer security experts can help reduce your odds of becoming a victim of tax-related identity theft.

### **File early.**

You can help beat fraudsters to the punch by filing your tax return early, so any attempt by a thief will be flagged and rejected by the IRS. *Tip:* Help speed up the preparation and submission of your tax return by importing your W-2 data directly to tax preparation companies such as: TurboTax®, H&R Block®, and TaxAct®.

### **Get personal.**

Hiring someone to do your taxes? Remember to ask how and where they store your documents and information, for how long, and what safeguards are in place while the information is in their possession? Also, never email financial documents or personal data to your tax preparer.

### **Avoid public Wi-Fi hotspots.**

Thieves can more easily grab information off unsecured Wi-Fi networks. Don't log in to your bank, investment, tax software, mortgage, or other financial accounts using a public Wi-Fi network. This includes not sending or uploading the files.

### **Use the big blue box.**

The US Post Office advises dropping off all sensitive mail, including your physical tax return, at the Post Office or in a USPS mailbox.

### **Don't be duped.**

If you receive an email, call or text from someone claiming to be an IRS agent who said you overpaid or owe money, it's likely an identity thief. If the IRS needs information, they will typically contact you first by mail. Learn more at <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/tax-scams-consumer-alerts>

Check it out online at [www.mytaxform.com](http://www.mytaxform.com)