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## ***NEWS RELEASE –***

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### **IT'S "TAX MADNESS" MONTH**

#### ***Tips to Make Your Tax Season... Less Taxing***

The Denver District Attorney's Office is offering tips and warnings as the 2017 income tax preparation season begins its busiest month.

"Filing day is one month away, but while citizens are busy gathering their documents, receipts, bank records and other information, identity thieves are also busy, scheming of ways to get citizens' tax refunds and steal people's identity," says District Attorney Beth McCann.

The following are tips and warnings to make your tax season...less taxing.

#### **1. FILE EARLY**

The earlier you file, the more likely you'll get your refund before the fraudsters.

#### **2. WHEN FILING ONLINE**

Make sure your internet connection is secure. No going to Starbucks or public Wifi to file. Those connections are not secure, making that coffee shop more than a latte stop.

#### **3. DON'T MAIL FROM HOME**

What's that you say? Here's what the "flag up" signals to fraudsters: "Hey, all my private tax information is in this envelope including my social security number and bank records. Come and get it!"

#### **4. EMAILS FROM IRS?**

Don't believe them! Tax identity thieves may send phony "phishing" emails or texts. The emails look like they are coming from the IRS, but know this: The IRS doesn't email, text, or call people. IRS will never request personal information over the Internet or phone. If the IRS does need to contact you, it will be through the mail. But, just to make sure the request is legitimate, call the IRS directly.

#### **5. CHECK YOUR MAILBOX**

Fraudsters love to beat you to your mailbox. Especially if there may be checks arriving. The best way to keep a fraudster away from your refund check is to request your return be automatically deposited into your bank account.



## **6. CHECK YOUR TAX PREPARER'S QUALIFICATIONS**

Know who is helping you file. If you are using an outside source to help you file, be aware that all paid tax preparers must have a Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN). In addition, ask if the preparer is affiliated with a professional organization and attends continuing education classes.

## **7. CHECK YOUR TAX PREPARER'S HISTORY**

Call the Better Business Bureau and check for any disciplinary actions and license status through the state boards of accountancy for certified public accountants; the state bar associations for attorneys; and the IRS Office of Enrollment for enrolled agents.

## **8. SUSPECT SOMETHING?**

If your tax records are not affected by identity theft, but you believe you may be at risk due to a lost or stolen purse or wallet, questionable credit card activity or credit report, contact the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit at 800-908-4490.

## **WARNING: FAKE IRS COLLECTION CALLS**

Additionally, the Denver District Attorney's Office continues to receive calls from consumers saying they are receiving disturbing calls from the 'IRS'. The caller says they are from the IRS, that you have back taxes due and a warrant is out for your arrest. The victim is then directed to purchase I-tunes cards, or a pre-loaded visa cards to 'get out of the warrant from the IRS'.

"These are scammers trying to get you to give them money to avoid a false arrest warrant. The call sounds so real, it is easy for someone to believe it," McCann warns. "Remember, IRS agents will never call a person directly, they will never threaten with a warrant, and will never request money to 'help you' get out of the payment due. Our suggestion is to just hang-up. If you remain concerned, call the IRS directly and verify that the call is a scam."

If you feel you have been a victim of tax fraud, please call the Denver District Attorney's Fraud Hotline 720-913-9179.