



Wave of Government Impersonation Scammers Target Washington Residents *Federal agencies do not threaten individuals or demand immediate payment*

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JOINT NEWS RELEASE

FBI Seattle Division

IRS Criminal Investigation Seattle Field Office

US Marshals Service, Western District of Washington

US District Court of Western Washington

Yakima Police Department

US Attorney's Office, Western District of Washington

This April Fool's Day, don't get fooled by scammers pretending to be from the FBI, Internal Revenue Service (IRS), US Marshals Service, or any other federal agency.

Law enforcement officials are aware of a recent wave of scam attempts targeting Washington state residents. Callers identify themselves as a federal officer and typically instruct people to wire "settlement" money to avoid arrest. These phone calls are fraudulent and call recipients should hang up immediately. Federal agencies do not call or email individuals, threatening them to send money.

There are many versions of this government impersonation scam, but they are all variations of the same tactic. The type of scam has been around for years and targets people across the nation. In the first three months of 2016, dozens of reports have streamed in to law enforcement about attempts to scam Washington residents—particularly in the Seattle and Yakima areas—but they are not uniquely targeted.

"Washington residents are receiving scam attempts right now but next month it could be residents in a different state," said Supervisory Special Agent Ethan Via of the FBI's white collar crime squad. "The timing of this scam is more intentional than the targeting. The recent uptick in scams may coincide with the tax season. It presents an opportunity to impersonate IRS agents and is a time when individuals and households may be more cognizant of federal authority, possibly making them more sensitive to appeals to their law-abiding intentions."

In addition, a scam phone call may seem legitimate because scammers can spoof caller ID information. It may appear the call is coming from a federal agency's legitimate phone number or from the Washington, DC, area, or may show the name of a federal agency.

FBI Impersonation

Scams impersonating the FBI have been around for years and continue today—sometimes citing current FBI Director James Comey or a local field office Special Agent in Charge. The FBI first [warned the public in 2008](#) that "the fraudulent e-mails give the appearance of legitimacy due to the usage of pictures of the FBI Director, seal, letterhead, and/or banners."

IRS Impersonation

Earlier this month, the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) warned that [criminals continue to impersonate IRS agents](#), resulting in reports of more than one million fraudulent contacts since October 2013 and more than 5,500 victims who have collectively lost approximately \$29 million. An unexpected call from the IRS is likely fraudulent because IRS policy mandates that it first contact taxpayers by mail or in person.

US Marshals Impersonation and Jury Service Scam

Earlier this week, the United States Courts warned that [scammers are now more sophisticated](#), using official-sounding call centers and citing designated court hearing times. The US Marshals Service has also received complaints of specific officer names or badge numbers being cited by scammers.

If you have been targeted by government-impersonation scammers, the sooner you report it, the better are the chances that law enforcement will be successful in their investigation. Here's how to report specific scam attempts:

FBI Impersonation: Call your local FBI field office

In Washington, the Seattle Division: 206-622-0460 (select option 1)

IRS Impersonation: Fill out the [“IRS Impersonation scam” form](#) on TIGTA's website

Marshal Impersonation: Call your local US Marshals Service field office

In Washington: 206-370-8685

In addition, [all types of fraud schemes and scams](#) can always be reported to the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) at www.ic3.gov. The following information is helpful to report:

- Header information from e-mail messages;
- Identifiers for the perpetrator (e.g., name, Web site, bank account, e-mail addresses);
- Details on how, why, and when you believe you were defrauded;
- Actual and attempted loss amounts;
- Details about the government impersonation; and
- Other relevant information you believe is necessary to support your complaint.

Filing a complaint through IC3's website allows analysts from the FBI to identify leads and patterns from the hundreds of complaints that are received daily. The sheer volume of complaints allows that information to come into view among disparate pieces, which can lead to stronger cases and help zero in on the major sources of criminal activity. The IC3 then refers the complaints, along with their analyses, to the relevant law enforcement agency for follow-up.

The public can learn about other common scams by visiting <http://www.fbi.gov/scams-safety/frauds-from-a-to-z>, and learn about ways to reduce their risk of being scammed: http://www.fbi.gov/scams-safety/fraud/internet_fraud.

For more information, please contact:

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