

## **Fraudulent Tax Returns Using Stolen Identities is a Crime on the Rise**

**Monday, February 02, 2015 12:00:00 PM (GMT)**

*LifeLock provides tips to help protect you this tax season*

The 2015 tax season just began and, if current trends stay true, millions of Americans may come to find out someone has fraudulently filed a tax return under their name. While not much can be done as an individual to prevent tax fraud, LifeLock, an industry leader in proactive identity theft protection, wants to help Americans by providing up-to-date information and tips that can help protect consumers' identities.

In the past couple years, an increasing number of taxpayers were affected, with 1.2 million affected in 2012 and an additional 1.6 million affected in 2013<sup>1</sup>. The IRS reported that it paid an estimated \$5.2 billion in fraudulent identity theft tax refunds in 2013, but prevented \$24.2 billion within the same year.<sup>2</sup> Identity theft is the No. 2 fear according to a study by Chapman University<sup>3</sup>. If your personal information, including Social Security number, was potentially stolen in the past year through one of 783 known data breaches in 2014,<sup>4</sup> extra attention should be paid this tax season.

While the IRS is working to help protect Americans, criminals currently need only two pieces of information to file a fake tax return – a Social Security number and date of birth. In fact, a criminal does not even need to file under the correct name. To further avoid detection, thieves purchase prepaid credit cards and the fraudulent refund is transferred to the card, which can then be used at an ATM to convert to cash.

### **Keep Information Protected During the 2015 Tax Season**

To help protect against tax fraud, LifeLock recommends taking these steps:

1. If you are concerned, phone the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit at 800-908-4490. Since the first day to file your 2014 return is Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2015, before many taxpayers get W-2 forms, it is a good preemptive step.
2. File your tax return early to get ahead of identity thieves. If you owe taxes, you can still file the return early and then wait to send your payment until the deadline on April 15.
3. If filing electronically, use a secure Internet connection. Do not use unsecure, publicly available Wi-Fi hotspots.
4. If you mail your return, take it directly to the post office. Do not leave your return in the mailbox for your mail carrier to pick up during the day, or in your office's open mail drop.
5. Shred copies of your tax return, drafts or calculation sheets you no longer need.
6. If hiring someone to help with your taxes, get recommendations and research a tax preparer thoroughly before handing over personal information.
7. Do not fall for scams. The IRS will never contact you by email, text or social media. If the IRS needs information, it will contact you by mail.
8. You cannot prevent data breaches or tax fraud, but you can make your personal information less accessible. [LifeLock Privacy Monitor](#) is a free and easy-to-use tool to help regain some privacy and make it harder for others to access personal information.

LifeLock offers more information about tax fraud and other forms of identity theft at <http://www.lifelock.com/education/identity-theft-news/>.

### **About LifeLock**

LifeLock, Inc. (NYSE:LOCK) is a leading provider of proactive identity theft protection services for consumers and fraud and risk management solutions for enterprises. LifeLock's threat detection, proactive

identity alerts, and comprehensive remediation services help provide peace of mind for consumers amid the growing threat of identity theft. Leveraging unique data, science and patented technology from ID Analytics, Inc., a wholly-owned subsidiary, LifeLock offers identity theft protection that goes beyond credit monitoring. As part of its commitment to help fight identity theft, LifeLock works to train law enforcement and partners with a variety of non-profit organizations to help consumers establish positive habits to combat this threat.

<sup>1</sup> Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, "[TIGTA Report: The IRS Needs to Improve Customer Service for Identity Theft Victims](#)," Nov. 7, 2013

<sup>2</sup> United States Government Accountability Office, "[Identity Theft: Additional Actions Could Help the IRS Combat the Large, Evolving Threat of Refund Fraud](#)," Aug. 2014

<sup>3</sup> Chapman University, "[What Americans Fear the Most](#)," Oct. 20, 2014

<sup>4</sup> Identity Theft Resource Center, "[Data Breach Reports](#)," page 29, Dec. 31, 2014

--30-- SB/LA

Contact:

LifeLock, Inc.  
Becca Youngs, 415-767-7752  
[media@LifeLock.com](mailto:media@LifeLock.com)

Copyright Business Wire 2015

1.2

**Industries:** Other Consumer, Technology, Data Management, Security, Professional Services, Finance, Consumer

**Languages:** English

**Primary Identifiers:** LOCK-US

**Related Identifiers:** LOCK-US, LOCK

**Source:** LifeLock, Inc.

**Subjects:** Product/Service