

## IRS Criminal Investigation sees surge in scams tied to Economic Impact Payments

SEATTLE — The Internal Revenue Service received a record number of complaints about Economic Impact Payment scams in June and July 2021. This number of scam complaints has not been seen in more than a decade!

“In today’s world, the protection of our personal information is tied to our well-being,” said IRS Criminal Investigation (IRS:CI) Special Agent in Charge Bret Kressin. “As threats against our personal information continue to rise, so must our vigilance in protecting that information. IRS:CI continues to safeguard this information from those who wish to steal it, but we need your help in being wary of potential scams and reporting them.”

“Victims lose billions each year to fraud schemes. At a time when many in our country continue to experience the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, criminals are taking advantage of government programs aimed at helping those in need. If you learn that a friend or family member has been targeted and is contemplating sending money to someone they do not know, please intercede. If the offer sounds fraudulent or too good to be true, it probably is,” said Acting U.S. Attorney Scott Erik Asphaug.

Phishing scams attempt to mirror legitimate IRS communications with the goal of convincing unsuspecting taxpayers to enter personal information or submit a payment. This information is then exploited by scammers.

Recent scam reports include:

- Text messages stating that a taxpayer is eligible for a “stimulus payment” and they must click on a link to complete the necessary information to claim it.
- Phishing emails claiming the IRS has calculated a taxpayer’s “fiscal activity” and they are eligible for an Economic Impact payment in a specific amount.

Although criminals are constantly changing their tactics, taxpayers can help protect themselves by acting as the first line of defense. The best way to avoid falling victim to a scam is knowing how the IRS communicates with taxpayers. The IRS does not send unsolicited texts or emails. The IRS does not threaten individuals with jail or lawsuits, nor does it demand tax payments on gift cards or via cryptocurrency.

Taxpayers should be on the lookout for grammatical, capitalization and spelling errors in emails and texts, which serve as fraud indicators. Taxpayers should also exercise caution when clicking shortened URLs, which can lead to fraudulent web pages.

Taxpayers who receive unsolicited emails or social media attempts to gather information that appear to be from either the IRS or an organization closely linked to the IRS, should forward the message to [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov). Taxpayers are encouraged not to engage potential scammers online or on the phone.

Taxpayers can report fraud or theft of their Economic Impact Payments to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA). Reports can be made online at [TIPS.TIGTA.GOV](https://tips.tigta.gov).

If you suspect you are a victim of identity theft as a result of a scam, visit the [Taxpayer Guide to Identity Theft](#) to know what steps to take.

To learn more about COVID-19 scams and other financial schemes, visit [IRS.gov](#). Official IRS information about COVID-19 and Economic Impact Payments can be found on the Coronavirus Tax Relief page, which is updated frequently.

## Samples of IRS Impersonation Emails and Text Messages

**From:** Customer Service <  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 24, 2021  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Notification : For security reasons, please re-enter the correct banking data previously provided to the IRS.



### Third Round of Economic Impact Payments Status Available

Dear Customers IRS

After the last annual calculations of your fiscal activity we have determined that you are eligible to receive a payment of \$815.05.

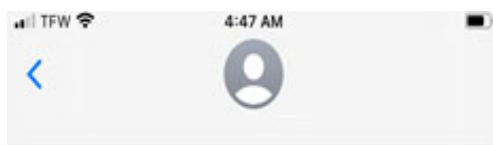
Each week we're sending the third payments to eligible individuals as we continue to process tax returns. Payments are sent by direct deposit or mail as a check or debit card.

[Claim my payment](#)

Note : For security reasons, we will record your ip-address, the date and time. Deliberate wrong inputs are criminally pursued and indicated.

Sincerely,

Internal Revenue Service.



Text Message  
Today 4:17 AM

Congrats, we are pleased to inform you that your information was pick up for COVID-19 stimulus payment from the Federal Government by JOE BIDEN. You are Eligible to the payment. Kindly follow the link too complete the form <https://bit.ly/3zc21yF> when you've submitted your details David Wienrich for the employment department will contact you for more details on how you will receive your money ASAP. Thanks

The sender is not in your contact list.

[Report Junk](#)

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