



Fake Charities on the IRS “Dirty Dozen” List of Tax Scams for 2017

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WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service today warned taxpayers about groups masquerading as charitable organizations to attract donations from unsuspecting contributors, one of the “Dirty Dozen” Tax Scams for the 2017 filing season.

"Fake charities set up by scam artists to steal your money or personal information are a recurring problem," said IRS Commissioner John Koskinen. "Taxpayers should take the time to research organizations before giving their hard-earned money."

Compiled annually, the “Dirty Dozen” lists a variety of common scams that taxpayers may encounter anytime, but many of these schemes peak during filing season as people prepare their returns or hire someone to prepare their taxes.

Perpetrators of illegal scams can face significant penalties and interest and possible criminal prosecution. IRS Criminal Investigation works closely with the Department of Justice to shut down scams and prosecute the criminals behind them.

The IRS offers these basic tips to taxpayers making charitable donations:

- Be wary of charities with names that are similar to familiar or nationally known organizations. Some phony charities use names or websites that sound or look like those of respected, legitimate organizations. IRS.gov has a search feature, Exempt Organizations [Select Check](#), which allows people to find legitimate, qualified charities to which donations may be tax-deductible. Legitimate charities will provide their Employer Identification Numbers (EIN), if requested, which can be used to verify their legitimacy through EO Select Check. It is advisable to double check using a charity's EIN.
- Don't give out personal financial information, such as Social Security numbers or passwords, to anyone who solicits a contribution. Scam artists may use this information to steal identities and money from victims. Donors often use credit cards to make donations. Be cautious when disclosing credit card numbers. Confirm that those soliciting a donation are calling from a legitimate charity.
- Don't give or send cash. For security and tax record purposes, contribute by check or credit card or another way that provides documentation of the gift.

Impersonation of Charitable Organizations

Another long-standing type of abuse or fraud involves scams that occur in the wake of significant natural disasters.

Following major disasters, it's common for scam artists to impersonate charities to get money or private information from well-intentioned taxpayers. Scam artists can use a variety of tactics. Some scammers operating bogus charities may contact people by telephone or email to solicit money or financial information. They may even directly contact disaster victims and claim to be working for or on behalf of the IRS to help the victims file casualty loss claims and get tax refunds.

Fraudsters may attempt to get personal financial information or Social Security numbers that can be used to steal the victims' identities or financial resources. Bogus websites may solicit funds for disaster victims.

To help disaster victims, the IRS encourages taxpayers to donate to recognized charities. Disaster victims can call the IRS toll-free disaster assistance telephone number (866-562-5227). Phone assistants will answer questions about tax relief or disaster-related tax issues.

Find legitimate and qualified charities with the [Select Check](#) search tool on IRS.gov. (EINs are frequently called federal tax identification numbers, which is the same as an EIN).