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## **Nebraska Teams with IRS, Other States, and Tax Industry to Protect Personal Tax Data**

LINCOLN – Taxpayers can fight cybercriminals by taking a few simple steps to protect their personal and tax data online, the Nebraska Department of Revenue (Department) announced today. The Department joined with the IRS, other states, and the private-sector tax industry this year to create new safeguards for 2016.

“Criminals often have access to personal data that can result in financial harm,” said Acting Tax Commissioner Leonard Sloup. “They can use this data to file fraudulent tax returns. Our message is we need your help. We all have a role to play. We want you to be aware of the security steps you can take – online and at home – to better protect your data from cybercriminals.”

Tax authorities made the appeal to the public on Thursday, November 19, 2015, in Washington, D.C. at a news conference that included more than a dozen state tax agency executives, IRS Commissioner John Koskinen, and representatives of the tax preparation and software developer industries.

“Identity thieves are evolving, and so must we,” said IRS Commissioner John Koskinen. “The IRS, the states, and the tax industry are putting in place even tougher safeguards. But, we need the public’s help. We need people to join with us and take an active role in protecting their personal and financial data from thieves.”

For the 2016 filing season, there will be new standards for logging onto all tax software products such as minimum password requirements, new security questions, and standard lockout features. There are also things taxpayers can do for themselves.

- Use security software to protect computers. This includes a firewall, antivirus protection, and the use of strong passwords.
- Beware of phishing emails. Beware of links that may potentially take you to a fabricated website designed to steal your logon information. The attachment you open may include a program that allows a thief to access your sensitive files without you even knowing.
- Beware of phone scams. If you get a call from anyone who says you will be sued or jailed if you don’t make an immediate payment, know this: that person is a fraud. Clever criminals pose as trusted organizations. The Department would have sent you several letters before you ever receive a phone call, and even then, the call will only discuss your payment options. And remember – if you need to make sure a call is legitimate, you can always hang up and dial us yourself [800-742-7474 (NE and IA), or 402-471-5729].

— More —

- Protect personal information. Do not routinely carry your Social Security number (SSN). Properly dispose of sensitive documents that you are not required to maintain by shredding before trashing. Proper shredding cuts on a diagonal and creates tiny pieces, not long, easy-to-reassemble strips. Check your credit reports and Social Security Administration accounts at least annually to ensure no one is using your good credit or using your SSN for employment. Oversharing on social media also gives identity thieves even more personal details.
- Appreciate the extra protections in your tax software. When you see new questions, lockout features, and password requirements for logging in to tax preparation products, feel good about it. Know that these features are in place for your protection, and that the requirements are in place for every tax preparation company.
- Know your tax preparer. If you file your return online, start at the Department's website, [revenue.nebraska.gov](http://revenue.nebraska.gov) or at [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov) – the websites and organization links there are legitimate. If you file using installed software, buy your software from a trusted retailer. If you use an accountant, make sure he or she is someone you know will be available after April 15.
- Tax preparation businesses also can help by sharing information with clients. Tips for customers are available in a new IRS publication, [Publication 4524](#), Security Awareness for Taxpayers. The IRS has also created a new resource page at [irs.gov/taxessecuritytogether](http://irs.gov/taxessecuritytogether).

If you believe you are a victim of identity theft, refer to the following resources:

- The [IRS Taxpayer Guide to Identity Theft](#); and
- The [Nebraska Attorney General's Identity Theft Repair Kit](#).

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APPROVED:



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