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Tax scam targeting Tri-Cities area

OLYMPIA – June 3, 2016 - The Washington Department of Revenue (Revenue) is cautioning individuals and businesses to be wary of any calls demanding immediate payment of back taxes and penalties. The agency today has heard from at least five individuals that were targeted by scammers.

The residents reported their caller ID displayed Revenue’s Richland office number, although no calls were made to these businesses from the agency. The scammer made threatening remarks and demanded immediate payment.

“We’re cautioning people to be suspicious if they receive any threatening call, even if the incoming phone number says it is from the state Department of Revenue,” said Revenue Director Vikki Smith. “You can always hang up and call us directly to ensure you are speaking with an official representative of the agency.”

Even though Washington does not have an income tax, and the agency is not affiliated with the federal Internal Revenue Service, scammers often try to confuse businesses and individuals alike with these types of calls.

Revenue staff do contact businesses by phone, typically to remind them of a missed tax return, but don’t demand immediate payment by methods such as a prepaid debit card.

The agency is advising businesses receiving a suspicious call to hang up, go to Revenue’s [webpage](#) to find either their local office or the toll-free line, and call the agency independently. If you are an individual (not a business owner), you can report a suspicious call to the Internal Revenue Service at <https://www.irs.gov/uac/report-phishing> or 800-829-1040.

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About Revenue

The Department of Revenue is Washington state’s primary tax administration agency, nationally recognized for innovation and service quality. Revenue collected \$20.8 billion in tax revenues in Fiscal Year 2015. These funds support education, social services, health care, corrections, public safety, natural resources conservation and other public services.