



American Citizen Services Unit
U.S. Embassy Santo Domingo
Warden Message



TO: Consular Wardens

FROM: ACS Unit

DATE: October 3, 2008

SUBJECT: Identity Theft

Following is a Warden's Message being transmitted for your information. Please circulate this to your constituents.

The Internal Revenue Service has issued a warning for American Citizens about identity theft and how to protect your identity from this type of fraud. This information can also be accessed via the internet at

http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_4362.html

How can someone steal your identity? Identity theft occurs when someone uses your personal information such as your name, social security number, or other identifying information, without your permission, to commit fraud or other crimes.

-- Identity theft is a serious crime. People whose identities have been stolen can spend months or years and their hard-earned money - cleaning up the mess thieves have made of their good name and credit record. In the meantime, victims may lose job opportunities, have loans refused, or even get arrested for crimes they didn't commit.

-- Generally, identity thieves use someone's personal data to steal his or her financial accounts and run up charges on the victim's existing credit cards, but the IRS has identified other potential areas where this type of fraud may occur as they relate directly to your tax records.

-- Undocumented workers or other individuals may use your social security number to get a job. That person's employer would report W-2 wages earned using your information to the IRS so it might appear that you did not report all of your income on your return.

-- An identity thief may file a tax return using your social security number to receive a refund or stimulus payment.

-- If the thief already filed a return using your social security number, the IRS will believe that you already filed and received your refund, and the return you just submitted is a second copy or duplicate.

-- If you do receive a notice from the IRS that leads you to believe someone may have used your social security number fraudulently, please notify the IRS immediately by responding to the name and number printed on the notice or letter.

3. Be alert to possible identity theft if the notice or letter states that:

-- more than one tax return for you was filed, or IRS records indicate you received wages from an employer unknown to you.

-- If you receive a notice, contact the IRS either by phone or in writing as directed in that notice. IRS tax examiners will work with you and other agencies, such as the Social Security Administration, to help resolve the problem.

4. The IRS does not initiate taxpayer communications through e-mail.

-- The IRS does not request detailed personal information through e-mail.

-- The IRS does not send e-mails requesting your PIN numbers, passwords or similar access information for credit cards, banks or other financial accounts.

5. If you receive an e-mail from someone claiming to be the IRS or directing you to an IRS site,

-- Do not reply.

-- Do not open any attachments. Attachments may contain malicious code that will infect your computer.

-- Do not click on any links

6. Phishing is the act of sending an e-mail to a user falsely claiming to be an established, legitimate enterprise in an

attempt to scam the user into surrendering private information that will be used for identity theft.

7. If you receive an e-mail or find a website you think is pretending to be the IRS:

- Forward the e-mail or website URL to the IRS at phishing@irs.gov.

- You can forward the message as received or provide the internet header in the e-mail. The internet header has additional information to help the IRS locate the sender.

- After you forward the e-mail or header information to the IRS, delete the message.

8. Minimizing Identity Theft:

Though you can't prevent identity theft entirely, you can minimize your risk. Protect your social security number.

- Don't carry your social security number (SSN); leave it in a secure place.

- Only give your SSN when absolutely necessary.

- Your employer and financial institution may need your SSN for wage and tax reporting purposes. Don't give a business your SSN just because they ask for it. Find out why before giving it out.

- Ask why your SSN is needed and if other types of identifiers can be used.

9. For more information on identity theft and your tax records, please visit www.irs.gov, and use the words

"Identity Theft" in the search block

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at <http://travel.state.gov> where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found. Up to date security information can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States, or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

These numbers are available from 8:00am to 8:00pm EST, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

American citizens traveling or residing overseas are encouraged to register with the appropriate U.S. Embassy or Consulate on the State Department's travel registration website at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>.

For any emergencies involving American citizens, please contact the American Citizens Services (ACS) Unit of the U.S. Embassy. The Consular Section Embassy is located at the corner of Cesar Nicolas Penson Street and Máximo Gómez Avenue, Santo Domingo, D.R.; telephone 809-731-4294; after hours emergency telephone 809-221-2171; ACS unit fax 809-689-6142; e-mail acssantodom@state.gov; web page www.usemb.gov.do.