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Cuomo Warns New Yorkers Of Tricky Tax Scam

Governor Cuomo says [New Yorkers better watch out](#). It's not yet Santa time, but scammers are using email and phones to contact New Yorkers trying to collect. "We're from the IRS or the [New York State Department of Taxation and Finance](#)," the scammers say. And the message is that the mark they target owes taxes.

The tax posers go on to threaten the unsuspecting New Yorkers with fines, deportation, arrest and more. "Pay some amount today," the scammers say, and we can leave you alone. It's easy to see how this could work, particularly since the scammers target especially vulnerable people. New immigrants are prime targets.

"My administration is committed to protecting New Yorkers from illegal and dishonest scams that rip-off taxpayers," Governor Cuomo said. "These criminals are posing as public officials and using fear to dupe taxpayers into forfeiting their money. I urge all New Yorkers to be mindful of these scam artists and encourage anyone who thinks they may have been targeted to immediately contact the proper authorities."



Andrew Cuomo (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

You might think email scams are the norm these days, but these are old-fashioned phone scams. The convincing caller reels off instructions to the mark to immediately submit payment for back taxes supposedly owed to the IRS or State. The payment method can vary, but is often via wire transfer or a pre-loaded debit card.

In some cases, these calls are accompanied by a fake IRS e-mail that supports the claim. If victims appear hesitant or unwilling to comply, the caller turns hostile, even threatening police arrest. Even seizure of the victim's home. If the victim *still* doesn't respond to the threats, the scammer has others call the victim. They pretend to be from a government agency such as local law enforcement.

Even if you aren't a recent immigrant, it's easy to see how unnerving this would be. New York has many immigrants. Scams targeting them with threats of deportation cut to the quick. The Governor's Office says many of the scam calls come from the 530 area code.

In some cases, the sophisticated scammers rely on telephonic 'spoofing' techniques. Amazingly, the legit phone numbers of the IRS, the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, or local police department may appear on the target's caller's ID screen. That could be pretty convincing to legitimize the fraudulent activity.

Scammers have also used fake names and IRS badge numbers. Some may be able to recite the last four digits of a victim's Social Security Number. The Governor urges people to hang up and report the crooks. The New York State Department of State's Division of Consumer Protection provides the following tips and information:

1. The State Tax Department and the IRS always make first contact by letter with a phone number you can contact to verify that it was sent by the agency.
2. Neither agency will request personal or financial information via email.
3. Hang up the phone immediately if someone claiming to be from the Tax Department or IRS unexpectedly calls and threatens police arrest, deportation or license revocation.
4. To report fraudulent activity to New York State authorities, contact the State Tax Department at (518) 435-8523 or the New York State Department of State's Division of Consumer Protection at (518) 474-8583. You can also file a complaint online.

You can reach me at Wood@WoodLLP.com. This discussion is not intended as legal advice, and cannot be relied upon for any purpose without the services of a qualified professional.