

**WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for January 22, 2024**  
**Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.**

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, & Healthy Relationships we'll talk about income tax scams and schemes, and as always look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

In the next few days, many of us will receive a W-2 Wage and Tax Statement Form from our employer. That is usually the trigger to begin working on filing our income tax returns.

It can also initiate all types of scams and fraud attempts. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) warn of scams and other fraudulent activity they begin to see as patterns or recurrences. Here are a few things to have on your radar.

*Abusive Return Preparer*

Many people could prepare their own tax return, but they feel more confident having someone else prepare the document for them. Be careful when choosing a tax preparer. Most provide excellent service and do so in an ethical manner. However, some do not have your best interest in mind and are looking for a way to cheat the system. These preparers file false and fraudulent tax returns and ultimately defraud their clients. According to the IRS, even if someone else prepares your return, you are ultimately responsible for all the information on the tax return. Be certain that you agree with all the numbers provided on your return before you sign it for submission.

*Abusive Tax Schemes*

As we get a little closer to April 15, the emails, texts, and phone calls will become more frequent.

You are likely familiar with phishing. This technique has been around for decades, using email to attempt to gain personal information. But hackers use a variety of techniques that are less obvious and more sophisticated all the time. Just remind yourself that if it sounds too good to be true, it most likely is too good to be true. Likewise, if it is threatening enough to make you nervous or downright scared, it likely is not true information. The scammers count on our emotional reaction to override our logical thought process.

A more recent type of scam will arrive through text message. This is called “smishing” because of the term “SMS message.” We don’t use SMS in our everyday language- we just say text. This will likely be some type of warning about a problem with a link to the solution. If you get one of these messages, don't reply or click the link. Report any scam by sending the email or a copy of the text to [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov).

The IRS never initiates contact with taxpayers by email, text, or social media regarding a bill or tax refund. Usually, the first communication from the IRS will be a letter. Therefore, some scammers will send actual letters. You can easily log in to the [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov) website with your ID.me account information to see a copy of any notice or letter in your file. There is also a section of the IRS website called “Understanding Your IRS Notice or Letter” that shows examples of common letters that are truly sent from the IRS.

After first mailing a notice or letter to a taxpayer, IRS agents may call to confirm an appointment or discuss items for a scheduled audit. Know that these will not be prerecorded messages. Also, they will never threaten to arrest a person for not complying.

In 2023 the IRS announced a major policy change that will end most unannounced visits to taxpayers by agency revenue officers. They are hoping this will reduce public confusion and enhance overall safety measures for taxpayers and employees.

And now let’s see what’s new from OSU Extension: Are you looking for some help to better Manage Your Money? Join our free online class Thursday evenings, February 1, 8, 15, and 22 to be empowered to take control of your financial situation. Also, the next series of ServSafe Manager training will be February 7, 14, and 21 with the proctored exam on February 28. Registration for all these programs is available on our Facebook page or our website [coshocton.osu.edu](https://coshocton.osu.edu).

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help educate and empower our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at [coshocton.osu.edu](https://coshocton.osu.edu). Make it a healthy day!