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Montana Department of Revenue alerts taxpayers to tax fraud from identity theft

HELENA – Several attempts to file fraudulent tax returns have been detected for this year’s income tax season, the Montana Department of Revenue announced today. The fraudulent filings were recently discovered by the department’s fraud detection programs.

“Basically, hackers have stolen people’s identities and filed fraudulent tax returns in order to steal refunds,” explained Department of Revenue Director Mike Kadas. “The department is vigilant about stopping fraud and is taking extra care with all returns to look for signs of identity theft and fake filings. It is important for Montanans to know that the department’s computer systems have not been compromised and remain secure.”

Since this year’s tax season started on January 20, the department has already stopped \$26,000 in fraudulent refunds. Last year, the department stopped approximately \$1.5 million in fraudulent refunds.

The department will contact taxpayers who have been identified as victims of a fraudulent filing.

Taxpayers who are concerned about their tax refunds or that their personal tax information may have been compromised should:

- Log into the tax software you’ve used in previous years and change your username and password. Do not use usernames or passwords that you’ve used for other accounts or websites.
- If you log into your tax software and it says you’ve already filed for 2014, that’s an indication that your identity may have been stolen. If you think there is a problem with your tax software account, contact the software company immediately.

Due to the increase in fraudulent returns from ID theft, the department is thoroughly reviewing all returns before issuing refunds. “We’re doing our due diligence and thank Montana taxpayers for their understanding as we work to keep their information safe,” said Director Kadas. “This has slowed down our process a little and we appreciate your patience if your refund takes a little longer to process this year.”

For more information about guarding against identity theft and what to do if you think you’re a victim, go to the Montana Department of Justice’s identity theft website at dojmt.gov/consumer/for-consumers/identity-theft/ or their Office of Consumer Protection at (800) 481-6896 or (406) 444-4500.

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