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Tax Identity Theft Awareness Week Reminds Consumers of Looming Threat

Equifax Provides Tips for Protecting Against Growing Crime

ATLANTA, Jan. 14, 2014 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Tax season is just around the corner, and as Americans are gearing up to file their tax returns, so are identity thieves.

Equifax (NYSE:EFX) is using [Tax Identity Theft Awareness Week](#), which takes place Jan. 13-17, as an opportunity to remind consumers of the growing problem of tax identity theft.

According to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the agency doubled indictments and sentencing in fiscal year 2013. From 2011 to November 2013, it stopped 14.6 million suspicious returns—but those are only the ones the IRS caught.

Sponsored by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), Tax Identity Theft Awareness Week will feature a Twitter chat and regional events in the states where [tax identity theft](#) is worst.

"The sheer volume of tax identity theft cases reported by the IRS is astounding," said Trey Loughran, president of the Personal Solutions unit at Equifax. "Consumers need to be aware of this growing problem and what steps they can take to help protect themselves."

[Tax identity theft](#) occurs when a criminal attempts to receive fraudulent tax refunds by filing a tax return using your personal information. There are myriad ways a criminal can get your personal information, including data breaches, lost or stolen wallets and old-fashioned dumpster diving.

Equifax is urging consumers to educate themselves. Here are some tips that may help protect you from becoming a victim:

- **File early.** The best defense is a good offense. If you file your tax return first, an identity thief will be denied when trying to use your Social Security number for a fake return.
- **Protect your mail.** If you're filing your taxes by mail, avoid leaving your forms to be picked up in the mailbox and take them directly to the post office instead.
- **Protect your computer.** While you're filing, you're transmitting a lot of personal information. Make sure you're using a secure Internet connection and that your anti-virus software is up-to-date and running.
- **Watch out for spam.** The IRS will never contact you by email and ask for your personal information, the agency says. Any such emails are fraudulent.
- **Check out your tax preparer.** Make sure you're dealing with a legitimate tax preparation service by checking with the Better Business Bureau. Never sign a blank tax return for someone else to fill out.
- **Fill out Form 8821.** This form, a tax information authorization form, wasn't originally intended to fight tax fraud, but can be useful to ensure you receive all IRS

communications, even if a criminal files a return with your Social Security number. Consider filing one for a child or elderly family member.

If you receive a notice from the IRS that states more than one tax return was filed for you, that you have a balance for a year you didn't file or that you received wages from an employer unknown to you, take action.

You will need to file a police report, contact the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit and fill out an identity theft affidavit.

About Equifax

Equifax Personal Solutions empowers consumers with the confidence and control to be their financial best. Find out more about Equifax's innovative suite of credit monitoring and identity protection products at www.equifax.com. Learn about identity theft and how to help protect yourself and your family at IdentityProtection.com. Get smart information on everything from credit to retirement, all in one place at the Equifax Finance Blog, blog.equifax.com.

Equifax is a global leader in consumer, commercial and workforce information solutions that provide businesses of all sizes and consumers with insight and information they can trust. Equifax organizes and assimilates data on more than 600 million consumers and 81 million businesses worldwide. The company's significant investments in differentiated data, its expertise in advanced analytics to explore and develop new multi-source data solutions, and its leading-edge proprietary technology enable it to create and deliver unparalleled customized insights that enrich both the performance of businesses and the lives of consumers.

Headquartered in Atlanta, Equifax operates or has investments in 18 countries and is a member of Standard & Poor's (S&P) 500® Index. Its common stock is traded on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) under the symbol EFX. In 2013, Equifax was named a Bloomberg BusinessWeek Top 50 company, was #3 in Fortune's Most Admired list in its category, and was named to InfoWeek 500 as well as the FinTech 100. For more information, please visit www.equifax.com.

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