



HMRC imposters now targeting landlines

Now that the majority of us are far more aware of email and text phishing and less likely to fall foul of these scams – the fraudsters have changed tack and started to revert back to the traditional method of cold-calling publically available phone numbers. Reports of phone scams have increased 360% in the last 6 months.

Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Mel Stride MP states that:

“If you receive a suspicious call to your landline from someone purporting to be from HMRC which threatens legal action, to put you in jail, or payment using vouchers: hang up and report it to HMRC who can work to take them off the network.”

HMRC have issued advice to UK taxpayers and requested that we all assume a new level of vigilance. If you know someone who has a landline, particularly those who may need protecting such as vulnerable relatives and neighbours, please make them aware. HMRC’s advice is:

- recognise the signs – genuine organisations like banks and HMRC will never contact you out of the blue to ask for your PIN, password or bank details
- stay safe – don’t give out private information, reply to text messages, download attachments or click on links in emails you weren’t expecting
- take action – forward suspicious emails claiming to be from HMRC and details of suspicious calls to phishing@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk and texts to 60599. Alternatively, contact Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or use its online fraud reporting tool, especially if you suffer financial loss
- check GOV.UK for information on how to avoid and report scams and recognise genuine HMRC contact

The last point is key. If you receive any form of communication – by email or landline – requesting personal information (particularly your bank details) politely close the call and use the official website’s contact details to call back. If you don’t have access to the internet, ask a relative to help or visit your local Citizen’s Advice Centre.

HMRC has made strides in the last year to close down many of the fraudsters’ phone lines and in conjunction with Ofcom they have shut down almost 450 lines. However, we need to remain cautious. As HMRC have advised:

The tax authority will only ever call you asking for payment on a debt that you are already aware of, either having received a letter about it, or after you've told us you owe some tax, for example through a Self-Assessment return.

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