

Beware of tax scams

We are now fast approaching the 31 January deadline for the 2020-21 tax year and unfortunately this coincides with a pick-up in scamming activity by fraudsters pretending to be the tax office, potentially drumming up panic in taxpayers.

The scale of these self-assessment scams is staggering - apparently over 800,000 tax-related scams were reported to HMRC in the past year.

How can you tell genuine from bogus communications?

HMRC have issued the following advice:

“More than 4 million emails and SMS will be issued to Self-Assessment taxpayers pointing them to guidance and support, prompting them to think about how they intend to pay their tax bill, and to seek support if they are unable to pay in full by 31 January.

“However, the department is also warning taxpayers not to be taken in by malicious emails, phone calls or texts, thinking that these are genuine HMRC communications referring to their Self-Assessment tax return.”

HMRC’s Director General for Customer Services continues:

“Never let yourself be rushed. If someone contacts you saying they’re from HMRC, wanting you to urgently transfer money or give personal information, be on your guard.

HMRC will also never ring up threatening arrest. Only criminals do that.

Scams come in many forms. Some threaten immediate arrest for tax evasion, others offer a tax rebate. Contacts like these should set alarm bells ringing, so if you are in any doubt whether the email, phone call or text is genuine, you can check the ‘HMRC scams’ advice on GOV.UK and find out how to report them to us.”

There are even bogus websites that look just like HMRC’s webpages, where you are encouraged to submit your outstanding tax return.



If in doubt....

If you do receive a phone call, email, or text purporting to be from HMRC, either threatening arrest, court action, promising a rebate, or some other urgent matter; before continuing with a conversation or replying to an email or text, end the call, do not reply to text or email and instead, contact HMRC directly using the contact numbers on the GOV.UK website, or login to your HMRC personal tax account. If you have an accountant, they will also be able to help.

Published in the Wigan Observer 30th November 2021.