



Rhode Island Department of Revenue

Division of Taxation

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TAX ADMINISTRATION

ADVISORY FOR TAX PROFESSIONALS
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Strong computer passwords help guard against identity theft

Security awareness tip from Rhode Island Division of Taxation and Internal Revenue Service

Computer users should strengthen their passwords as a way to combat identity theft. The password serves as the first line of defense to stop hackers and identity thieves from accessing your computer, mobile phone, and other internet-accessible devices.



The IRS, state tax agencies, and the tax professional industry are asking for your help in their effort to combat identity theft and fraudulent tax returns. Working in partnership with you, we can make a difference.

That's why we launched a public awareness campaign that we call Taxes. Security. Together. We've also launched a series of security awareness tips that can help protect you from cybercriminals. Here are a few basic steps to making passwords better and stronger:

- 1. Add password protections to all devices.** You should use a password to protect any device that gives you that opportunity. Not only your computer, tablet or mobile phone, but also your wireless network. The password is your first line of defense.
- 2. Change all factory password settings.** If your device comes with factory password settings – for example, the camera on your laptop – change it immediately.
- 3. Longer is better.** A password should be a minimum of eight digits, but 10 to 12 is even better. It should be a combination of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers, and special characters. Do not use your name or birthdate.
- 4. Do not repeat passwords.** These days, people often have multiple password-protected accounts. Do not use the same password repeatedly. Should a thief steal your password, the thief immediately will have access to other important accounts. Use different passwords, especially on important financial or tax accounts.
- 5. Use two-factor authentication options.** Many social media and financial institutions now give you the option of setting up a two-factor or two-step authentication process. A two-factor process

involves a security code being sent to your registered mobile phone. This means if a thief manages to steal your user name and password, the thief will be blocked from accessing your accounts.

6. Consider a password manager. One option for keeping track of your passwords on multiple accounts and getting help in creating strong passwords is to use a password manager. Some reputable companies offer free or low-cost versions of their products. See if a password manager might be right for you.



The IRS, state tax agencies, and the tax industry have joined as the Security Summit to implement a series of initiatives to help protect you from tax-related identity theft in 2017. The Security Summit partners recently announced "National Tax Security Awareness Week."

As part of the Security Summit effort, the IRS, the states, and the tax community will share a variety of information throughout the week to educate taxpayers on steps they should take to protect themselves from identity theft and tax scams as well as protect their valuable financial data in advance of the upcoming filing season. To learn more about protecting your personal and financial data, see: <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/taxes-security-together>.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To reach the Rhode Island Division of Taxation, call the Division's main phone line at (401) 574-8829. The Division is normally open to the public from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. business days, and is located at One Capitol Hill in Providence, in the Powers Building, which is diagonally across Smith Street from the State House. For forms, instructions, and other information, see the Division website: www.tax.ri.gov. To reach specific sections with the agency, by phone or email, use the following address: www.tax.ri.gov/contact/