



# S.C.R.A.M. GAZETTE



## The IRS will call you now!

### What IRS change could cause confusion with taxpayers?

What we're talking about is the way the IRS collects a tax debt. Time and time again we've told you that if anyone calls you claiming to be collecting a tax debt, hang up. That's because the IRS had a rule that they would never ask for payment information over the phone.

### That's about to change.

The IRS is going to start using third-party debt collectors. It plans to begin private collection of certain overdue federal tax debts in April 2017 and has selected four contractors to implement the new program. The IRS posted this explanation on its site:

"The new program, authorized under a federal law enacted by Congress last December, enables these designated contractors to collect, on the government's behalf, outstanding inactive tax receivables. Authorized under a federal law enacted by Congress in December 2015, Section 32102 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) requires the IRS to use private collection agencies for the collection of outstanding inactive tax receivables."

These private collection agencies will be working on older accounts where the taxpayer owes money but the IRS has stopped working on the account.

### How to identify an IRS phone scam

Knowing that this rule change could open the floodgates on phone scams, the IRS is telling taxpayers what to watch out for.

- **Expect written correspondence** - If you are impacted by this change, the IRS will give taxpayers and their representatives written notice that the accounts are being transferred to private collection agencies. The agencies will send a second, separate letter to the taxpayer and their representative confirming this transfer.
- **Electronic Payment** - Private collection agencies will **NOT** ask for payment on a prepaid debit, iTunes or gift card. Taxpayers will be informed about electronic payment options on [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov).
- **Checks** - Payment by check should be payable to the U.S. Treasury and sent directly to the IRS, not the private collection agency.

So if you receive a call from someone claiming to collect an IRS debt, it could actually be real now. If you are concerned that the call is a scam, ask

the alleged representative for their toll-free number. Here are the four private collection agencies that the IRS will assign cases to:

1. **CBE** - P.O. Box 2217 Waterloo, IA 50704 **1-800-910-5837**
2. **ConServe** - P.O. Box 307 Fairport, NY 14450 -0307 **1-844-853-4875**
3. **Performant** - P.O. Box 9045 Pleasanton, CA 94566-9045 **1-844-807-9367**
4. **Pioneer** - P.O. Box 500 Horseheads, NY 14845 **1-800-448-3531**

If you're skeptical about the agent on the phone, get their company information, phone number and extension. Then call the company's official toll-free number listed above.

The IRS also urges you to stay vigilant against tax scams from anyone claiming to be collecting on the agency's behalf. Even with private debt collection, you shouldn't receive unexpected phone calls from the IRS demanding payment. When people owe tax, the IRS always sends several collection notices through the mail before making phone calls.

## Financial Exploitation Safety Tips

Financial Exploitation can affect the elderly in a variety of ways, regardless if they live in home, assisted living or a nursing home setting.

The National Adult Protective Services Association, says 1 in 20 seniors reported being the victim of financial exploitation in the recent past. But that number is only a fraction of cases of financial exploitation, as many cases never get reported.

Unfortunately, financial exploitation most often comes at the hands of people the senior or disabled person trusts. The most common scenarios involve:

- Caregivers such as nursing home staff
- Family members
- Friends
- Medical Providers
- Staff members at banks
- Religious advisors such as church pastors
- In home caregivers or volunteers

### Warning Signs of Financial Abuse

Some common ways that a person may financially exploit a senior or disabled person include:

- Convincing the victim to grant a Power of Attorney, which the person then uses to steal money or assets for his or her own use
- Using joint bank accounts to take the victim's money
- Stealing ATM cards or checks to take money out of the victim's accounts
- Threatening or using coercion against the victim for financial gain
- Refusing to use the victim's money to pay for medical care or personal needs so that the abuser can use the money or assets
- Charging for services that weren't provided
- Forging the victim's signature on documents or checks
- Stealing the victim's valuables to sell for cash

According to the Illinois Attorney General and other sources, potential warning signs that a nursing home resident is being financially exploited include:

- Visitors aren't allowed to see the resident
- A person who has access to the resident's money or accounts appears to be using money to benefit themselves
- Despite having money, the resident doesn't have adequate food, clothing, or personal items
- The resident's personal items often go missing
- The resident's assets are transferred without his or her permission
- Sudden changes to wills or trusts
- An unusual pattern of withdrawals from financial accounts

**Next Presentation**  
**5/17 @ 11 AM**  
**Financial**  
**Exploitation**

### Niles Police Department

7000 W. Touhy Ave  
Niles, IL 60714  
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# Home Repair Scams

Home repair and improvement scams are among the most common consumer complaints. Consumers complain about shoddy workmanship, “fly-by-night” contractors who take payments and don’t show up to do the work, and companies that pressure homeowners into expensive, unneeded repairs. You can avoid becoming a victim by taking important precautions before having home repairs done.

Beware of roving con artists. These scam artists knock on people’s doors and offer to do work such as roofing, gutter cleaning, driveway paving or tree pruning. They sometimes appear in the aftermath of hailstorms or tornados, offering to repair storm damage.

## Warning signs of a scam:

- **An offer of a reduced price because they’ve “just done a job nearby and have materials left over”**
- **An offer of a “special” percentage off the repair without being clear about what the bottom-line price will be**
- **No street address or telephone number, just a post office box or an answering service**
- **A refusal to give a written estimate or contract**
- **Accepts only cash payments and asks you to pay entire job up front.**

Don’t hire contractors who come to your door unsolicited, even if they seem honest



and helpful. These con artists may take your money and disappear before finishing the job, or sometimes before even starting the work, and are probably not licensed. If something goes wrong, you would have no way to track them down. Also, admitting strangers to your home puts you at risk of being robbed.

1. Don’t pre-pay for work. Scam artists will often want homeowners to pay for work in advance. Remember that a valid contractor will send you a cost estimate and you will only pay when work has been completed to your satisfaction, or you may pay for materials only as work proceeds. A legitimate home remodeling business will understand if you want to get estimates from other companies as well as do your own research.
2. Research home remodeling companies. Obtain the following pieces of information about a contractor: tax ID number, business license, permanent address, website and phone number. You can also ask the

company for references and previous customers about projects they completed.

3. Request a written contract. Ask the contractor to draw up a contract that contains details such as a project description, warranties, payment schedule and expected completion date.
4. Beware of unsolicited visits regarding home repairs. Scammers will unexpectedly knock on residential doors and point out potential problems that can be fixed at a seemingly good price. For instance, if a person suddenly shows up at your door offering to paint your house or fix your roof, then you need to be cautious. Don’t consent to a job on the spot without doing your research and requesting a contract as discussed above.
5. Review insurance coverage. Request to see a copy of the company’s liability coverage. It’s important to remember that homeowners could be liable for an accident that occurs if a home remodeling company isn’t properly insured.

Whatever repairs, upgrades or maintenance you do be sure to do your research, ask for those references and be sure they are properly licensed. You can always contact Community Development for assistance in dealing with contractors.

## If you See Something, Say Something! How to identify suspicious activities

Reporting of suspicious activities really depends on being to identify as well as understand what “suspicious” means. The simplest way to explain “suspicious behavior” is to say that it is when something is out of place, not quite right or just makes you feel ‘weird’ about it.

### Signs and Behaviors that may be suspicious

- A person running, that may not be in the appropriate attire for that type of activity.
- Person carrying property, such as large electronics, bags, pillowcases or carrying of a tool, in the absence of any other tools or work vehicle.



- Persons going door-to-door—leaving property unattended or unsecured is one of the leading crime statistics today. Lock up bicycles, property and doors, will go a long way to stopping theft. But if you observe a person going door to door, looking in windows or entering backyards. In addition, people soliciting for services, such as lawn care, or home repair, with-

out identification, advertisements or literature.

- Certain Moving Vehicles—such as slow moving vehicles or driving through the neighborhood without lights or repetitive course.
- Unusual Behavior—which might include wearing clothing that is not appropriate for the weather, or activity the person is purported to be participating in. Nervousness, glancing or other signs of mental discomfort/being ill-at-ease etc. Hiding behind objects or in the shadows
- Unusual Noises—banging noises, electronic tool use at odd hours, barking dogs in the neighborhood, may be signs that something is going on.

**2017 Events/Presentations**  
**5/17 @11 am Financial Exploitation**